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THE ISLE OF BOY

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A COMEDY

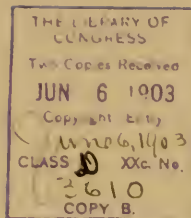
BY

THOMAS HENRY HALL CAINE



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No.

CHARACTERS

GOVERNOR

BISHOP

JUDGE

SENIESCHAL

HEAD CONSTABLE

POSTMASTER

THE MAYOR

} *Of the Isle of Boy.*

"BILL"—*The Governor's Son.*

RUBINA—*The Governor's Wife.*

AGATHA—*The Governor's Daughter.*

"DADDIE"

"MAMMIE"

LESTA LILY

SCENE.—*The Isle of Boy, a dependency of the
British Crown.*

TIME.—*Any time.*

THE AUTHOR desires to acknowledge his obligations to the celebrated Russian Comedy, “The Revisor,” but to say that the *motif* and construction of his comedy are, to the best of his knowledge, original.

ACT I

ACT I.

SCENE:—*A room in Government House. Doors right and left. Window and balcony at back. Table covered with blue-books, etc., usual appointments of an official department. Telephones, etc. Desk for Secretary. (PRIVATE SECRETARY sitting at desk.)*

Enter FOOTMAN with letter on salver.

FOOTMAN. For His Excellency. (*Goes out.*)

SECRETARY (*looking at letter*). “Whitehall”! (*Shrugs his shoulders.*) More trouble for the Lieutenant-Governor. (*Rises to put letter on table as GOVERNOR enters.*) Letter, your Excellency.

GOVERNOR. “Treasury”! (*Tears open letter and reads.*) What’s this? “Dear friend and benefactor, having received so many and such particular proofs of your friendship”—(*Mutters over letter.*) Good Lord! Princee Henry—incognito! Here’s a pretty kettle of fish!

SECRETARY. Anything I can do, your Excellency?

GOVERNOR. No! Yes, that is to say—telephone instantly for that double-eyed dunce, the Head Constable. (SECRETARY *takes up telephone.*) Oh, wait! Talking into telephones is like whispering into the ear of a woman—you know what goes in, but the devil only knows what comes out. Take a sheet of paper and write—Quick, quick, quick!

SECRETARY. I'm ready, sir.

GOVERNOR (*dictating*). "Dear friend and respected colleague—"

SECRETARY (*writing*). "—respected colleague."

GOVERNOR (*dictating*). "I have just received from secret sources a very important piece of news! A royal Prince, cruising on his yacht, is likely to put it at the Isle of Boy. He will pretend to be a private person and may come at any time, if he has not already arrived—and is at this moment staying somewhere incognito—"

SECRETARY. "—incognito."

GOVERNOR. Wonder if the ignorant ass will know what incognito means! No matter! (*Dictating.*) "Therefore I beg of you to exercise your usual wisdom and discretion in this delicate and difficult matter. Let a sharp look-out be kept on all yachts entering and leaving the bay, and lest our royal guest should be already ashore in the

disguise which it has pleased him to adopt, let every hotel be visited and every exceptional-looking visitor sagaciously interviewed—”

SECRETARY. “—interviewed.”

GOVERNOR. Hope the green goose won't imagine that means the newspapers. Go on, (*dictating*) “I need not tell a public servant of your great intelligence and experience to regard these instructions as strictly confidential, but you will oblige me by communicating immediately with the Judge, the Bishop, the Mayor, and the Seneschal, and request them to step up to me without a moment's delay.”

SECRETARY. “—a moment's delay!”

GOVERNOR (*dictating*). “Yours in frantic haste—Lieutenant-Governor.” (*Ringling bell.*)

SECRETARY. “—Lieutenant-Governor.”

(GOVERNOR *signs letter, puts it in envelope and gives it back to SECRETARY.*)

GOVERNOR. By messenger—at once.

SECRETARY. At once. (*SECRETARY goes out.*)

FOOTMAN *enters.*

GOVERNOR. Tell your mistress and my daughter that I wish to see them instantly.

FOOTMAN. Instantly, Excellency.

(*FOOTMAN goes out.*)

GOVERNOR. Here's a pretty business! Incognito! Why incognito? Why in the devil's name,



incognito? (*Walks to and fro, slapping his forehead:*) I have it! I have it!

Enter WIFE and DAUGHTER of GOVERNOR.

Ah, Rubina! And Agatha, my child, come here—I have something to tell you: a Prince is coming to visit the Isle of Boy.

WIFE (*joyfully*). A Prince?

GOVERNOR. Yes, a Prince! Of the royal blood too.

WIFE. Well, I declare!

GOVERNOR. Here is a letter from that clerk in the Treasury— *You* know him, Rubina—the one I sent the little present to at Christmas. He tells me Prince Henry——

WIFE. The young Prince! Shall we have him here?

GOVERNOR. He will pretend to be a private person and come in disguise.

DAUGHTER. How extraordinary!

WIFE. How jolly! But there'll be receptions and processions and dances—will there not?

GOVERNOR. Rubina, my darling, you are a dunce. Why do people travel incognito?

WIFE. I don't know, unless they are trying to prevent anybody from knowing them.

GOVERNOR. Precisely! And why do people try to prevent anybody from knowing them?

WIFE. I dun' know, unless they've been doing something.

GOVERNOR. Or are *going* to do something. Great celebrities and great criminals always travel incognito when they are going to do something—something serious, something disturbing.

WIFE. Goodness me, you don't mean that! And yet I might have known. I had a sort of presentiment of it. All last night I dreamt of spiders. There were four of them—so black and enormous. I thought I was a fly and when they seized hold of me in bed——

GOVERNOR. My dear, you must get the spare room ready.

WIFE. The spare room?

GOVERNOR. He may arrive at any hour, if he has not already done so.

DAUGHTER. But if he is to come in disguise——

GOVERNOR. Leave it to me, my child. Meantime have the spare room ready.

WIFE. But there's Bill.

GOVERNOR. Which *Bill*?

WIFE. Why, *our* Bill, my dear. The poor boy is coming home from Cambridge.

GOVERNOR. Send him back. Tell him not to come.

DAUGHTER. But he is coming on such a particular end: he has fallen in love, papa.

GOVERNOR. The booby!

WIFE. He wants to tell us all about the lady, and to ask your permission to marry her.

GOVERNOR. Bah!

DAUGHTER. She's so bright, he says, so clever—and if she's poor she's so pretty and if she's little, she's so sweet.

GOVERNOR. Pickles! Send Master Bill a telegram to say his room will probably be wanted for more important company.

WIFE. But he has telegraphed that he is to arrive this afternoon.

GOVERNOR. Then put him in the loft, the stable, the hen-coop—anywhere. I've something better to think of to-day than a boy with a head full of love and flim-flam.

Enter FOOTMAN.

FOOTMAN. His Honour the Judge, the Bishop, the Mayor, and the Seneschal!

(The LADIES go out.)

FOUR ELDERLY MEN *come in—grotesque figures in black, long, old-fashioned coats, silk hats—All very solemn and severe.*

GOVERNOR. Sit down, gentlemen, sit down.

(They sit in a half-circle—the GOVERNOR in the middle.)

I have called you together, my dear and esteemed colleagues, to hear an alarming piece of news.

JUDGE (*a red-nosed person*). Yes, we know. We heard something from the Head Constable.

GOVERNOR. Where is the Head Constable?

BISHOP. Gone to the post-office to consult the postmaster.

GOVERNOR. Good!

SENECHAL. But who is the Prince that is coming, your Excellency?

GOVERNOR. What—didn't I mention the name—Prince Henry!

JUDGE. The young Prince Henry?

GOVERNOR. He is coming incognito!

BISHOP. Extraordinary!

MAYOR. Simply extraordinary!

GOVERNOR. Incognito, you understand. There must be some meaning in that! What do *you* think about it, Bishop?

BISHOP (*with the manner of the pulpit*). What do *I* think about it, your Excellency? I think it is a deep political move of some sort. Probably England intends to make war on some foreign nation and is sending the young Prince to see if she can rely on the support of the Isle of Boy.

GOVERNOR (*derisively*). Ah, *you've* got it! *You* know a thing or two. The idea of England relying on the Isle of Boy! Why, we've only two soldiers in the place, and one of them is the old pensioner who keeps the Castle—and the other goes

hopping about on a wooden leg. What do *you* say, Seneschal?

SENESCHAL. I say it looks serious—undoubtedly serious. But why should we think the young Prince is coming to do us harm? Why not to do us good? Isn't he to come of age shortly?—and at royal festivals of that sort isn't it usual to give away titles and decorations and orders and so forth? Now, who knows but the King has sent the Prince to see for himself which of us is worthy——

GOVERNOR. Pooh! As if titles were in the habit of chasing people around like that! It's the other way about, my friend! Titles are like women: you follow them about until you get them, and then you tell everybody they followed you. But what do *you* say, Judge?

JUDGE (*taking a nip of spirits out of a flask, then clearing his throat and speaking with a judicial air*). I say, your Excellency, there's no reason to suppose the young Prince is coming on public business at all. Why not private business? The Prince is young and merry and fond of pleasure, isn't he? Even if he *is* a Prince, he is of the same flesh and blood as ourselves—you'll not deny that, gentlemen. And then the Isle of Boy is a little Elysium in the holiday season—and isn't this the holiday season, gentlemen? Heaps of girls, music playing, flags flying, dances, drinks——

GOVERNOR. Bosh! Girls indeed! What an

idea! Do you think that with London and Paris and all the world to choose from, I, even I, when I want girls—h'm—that is to say, in a manner of speaking, *if* I wanted them— But how do *you* feel about it, Mr. Mayor?

MAYOR. How do *I* feel? I feel—I feel—How do *you* feel, your Excellency?

GOVERNOR. I? Well, I'm no coward, but I confess I feel a little—just a *little* uncomfortable. It's this cursed incognito that's on my brain. Why incognito? Why the deuce should a Prince of the royal blood come incognito to the Isle of Boy? Shall I tell you why?

ALL. Tell us, your Excellency.

GOVERNOR (*in bated breath, drawing their heads together*). Annexation!

ALL. Never!

GOVERNOR. Yes, one after another the islands have been annexed, and we have escaped hitherto, but it's to be our turn next!

BISHOP. You don't say so!

GOVERNOR (*opening letter*). I have an influential friend in the Treasury. Listen. (*Reads.*) “Dear friend and benefactor—Having received so many and such particular proofs of your friendship—” H'm, family matters, you know. (*Mutters over sentences.*) Ah, here it is— “what the object of the visit is I do not know, but as it is a sur-

prise visit it is probably intended to take you un-
awares, so (*lifting his finger and raising his voice*)
I advise you to use precautions, and if there is any-
thing in the administration of the Isle of Boy which
you do not wish the King and the Government to
hear about——”

MAYOR. Good Lord, our time has come at last!

SENESCHAL. Yes, the Government may be far
away, but it sees everything——

GOVERNOR. It may or it may not—Anyhow,
gentlemen, I have warned you. You especially,
Judge. Without doubt, when the Prince comes the
first thing he will want to look into is the adminis-
tration of the law, and when he finds that the Judge
of the Isle of Boy is a drunkard——

JUDGE (*rising indignantly*). A drunkard!
What do you mean by a drunkard, your Excel-
lency? There are drunkards and drunkards. You
wouldn't call a man a drunkard because he has the
misfortune to get drunk— My doctor orders me
to take a little whiskey at the end of a meal, and so
I merely——

GOVERNOR. You merely go on taking it until
the beginning of the next—precisely! (JUDGE
sits.) And then you, Bishop. (BISHOP *moves un-*
easily.) I intended to mention it to you before, but
somehow it escaped my memory. You represent the
Church—yet everybody knows you are a rank Athe-
ist, and to hear you talk after dinner on the sub-

ject of the Creation is simply enough to make one's hair stand on end.

BISHOP (*rising*). What has that got to do with the Prince? I've reasoned it out with my own unaided intellect.

GOVERNOR. Perhaps so, but too much intellect in a Bishop isn't good for religion, and I wouldn't do it if I were you. (BISHOP *sits*.) And then you, too, Mr. Mayor. (*The MAYOR moves uneasily.*) You are the magistrate who grants the licenses, but when the Prince finds out that you are a publican yourself, in secret——

MAYOR (*rising*). A publican?

GOVERNOR. In secret, I say——

MAYOR (*sitting*). Lord save us!

GOVERNOR. And hold half the public houses in the name of your mother-in-law——

MAYOR. I'll sell them all off to-morrow.

GOVERNOR. I would recommend you to do so. And you also, Seneschal.

(SENESCHAL *moves uneasily.*)

SENESCHAL (*rising*). A grocer!

GOVERNOR. Well, a wholesale Chandler or Provision Merchant— (SENESCHAL *sits*.) And you supply the prisons, and I advise you to see that the women have enough soap to wash their linen occasionally—and that the men sometimes have clean faces. Prisoners are not persons to be pampered with luxuries, I admit, but that's no reason why

they should always go about looking like chimney-sweeps.

SENESCHAL (*trembling*). They shall have soap to-day, your Excellency, soft soap—oceans of it.

GOVERNOR. As regards myself, of course——

ALL (*groaning*). Yes, of course!

GOVERNOR (*emphatically*). Of course there isn't a man living who hasn't *some* little peccadilloes to account for, and I'm sure to hear of mine now the Prince is coming.

ALL. Sure to—sure to!

GOVERNOR. It seems that I'm unpopular with the Banks, merely because I hold a few overdrafts—and with the shopkeepers simply because I don't pay my bills. I always give them my I. O. U. and what more do they want? (SENESCHAL and MAYOR *groan audibly* and GOVERNOR *looks severely at them*.) But I believe there'll be some sort of complaint drawn up against me when the Prince comes.

ALL. Certain to be! Certain to be!

GOVERNOR (*significantly*). Not that I care a snap about that, and if you hear of anybody who wants to complain, just tell him to wait until the Prince has gone and I'll give him something to complain about. (MAYOR and SENESCHAL *groan again*.) But it's this cursed incognito that bothers me. I fully expect the door to open, and all of a

sudden. (*The door opens with a bang and GOVERNOR rises with a gasp.*) I knew it!

The HEAD CONSTABLE *and the* POSTMASTER
enter breathless.

HEAD CONSTABLE (*who speaks with a lisp*).
Such a piece of news.

POSTMASTER (*who stutters*). Su-such a fi-find!

ALL. What is it—what is it?

POSTMASTER. The Con-con-constable and
I—

HEAD CONSTABLE. All right, Postmaster, let
me tell it!

POSTMASTER. Al-allow me.

HEAD CONSTABLE. No, no—you can't tell the
story—you stutter.

POSTMASTER. And you lis-lis-lisp!

GOVERNOR. Go on, for the Lord's sake, somebody. My heart's in my mouth! Sit down, gentlemen, take seats! Postmaster, here's a chair for you. (*They sit in a circle with the POSTMASTER and HEAD CONSTABLE in the middle and JUDGE and BISHOP with their backs to the audience.*) Well now, what is it? What is it?

HEAD CONSTABLE. Permit me—permit *me*. Do let me tell the news. As soon as I received the message from your Excellency I rang up the Judge, the Bishop, the Mayor, and the Seneschal, and then went over to the Postmaster.

POSTMASTER. Y-y-yes, he ca-came over to me——

HEAD CONSTABLE. To see if any remarkable kind of letter had passed through his hands—anything with a royal coat-of-arms on it—that would help us to trace the personage we want if he had already arrived on the island.

POSTMASTER. Noth-noth-nothing, gentlemen, nothing!

HEAD CONSTABLE. But as luck would have it, the Postmaster—now, don't interrupt me—please, gentlemen, oblige me——

GOVERNOR. Go on, for Heaven's sake.

HEAD CONSTABLE. The Postmaster was at that moment talking to one of his postmen who was reporting a peculiar circumstance——

POSTMASTER. Mo-mo-most peculiar!

HEAD CONSTABLE. He had delivered a letter every day for a week—with the Cambridge postmark—always the Cambridge postmark—to a young lady staying at an inn on the——

POSTMASTER. Cl-close to the fish-fish-market.

HEAD CONSTABLE (*nodding*). Close to the fish-market.

POSTMASTER. Kept by Peter Quiggan.

HEAD CONSTABLE. Yes, kept by Peter Quiggan.

POSTMASTER. His wi-wi-wife presented him wi-wi-with a baby last week, a boy——

HEAD CONSTABLE. Good Lord! Will nobody——

POSTMASTER. Ju-ju-just like his father.

GOVERNOR (*rising in anger*). Will you stop, Postmaster? (*Sitting.*) Go on, Mr. Constable.

HEAD CONSTABLE. Well, the young lady had turned out to be a young man.

GOVERNOR. A what?

HEAD CONSTABLE. Yes, your Excellency—when the postman took the letter this morning.

POSTMASTER. Wi-wi-with the Cam-Cambridge postmark——

GOVERNOR. Confound the Cambridge postmark!

HEAD CONSTABLE. He opened the door of the sitting-room suddenly and beheld the young woman was a young man! (*ALL lean back and whistle.*)

HEAD CONSTABLE. When I heard that I said “Hello!”

POSTMASTER. No, *I* sa-said—“Hel-hell-hello!”

HEAD CONSTABLE. Well, first *you* said it, and then *I* did. “Hello,” we said. “There’s something up here.” So off we go to the inn.

POSTMASTER. On the qu-quay?

HEAD CONSTABLE. On the quay——

POSTMASTER. Where the cir-circus pe-people stay.

HEAD CONSTABLE. And when we get there we

peep into the room through the round glass panels over the door.

POSTMASTER. Li-like this—(*Lifts the arm of the Bishop to his head to make a loop*).

HEAD CONSTABLE. Yes, both of us, like this. (*Lifts the arm of the JUDGE in the same way—they both look through with faces to the audience.*)

GOVERNOR. Well, well, what do you see?

HEAD CONSTABLE. We haven't been peeping a moment when in comes a young woman from the street——

POSTMASTER. Ra-rather goo-good-looking.

HEAD CONSTABLE. Very good-looking.

GOVERNOR. What is she doing?

HEAD CONSTABLE. She is beginning to undress!

ALL. Oh! Oh! (*They look at each other.*)

HEAD CONSTABLE. That is to say, a little at a time, you know—first she takes off her bodice—then she slips off her—(*Indicates skirt*).

JUDGE. Order!

BISHOP. Really, gentlemen! (*They break up. Business.*)

HEAD CONSTABLE. We couldn't help it—we really couldn't—and before we knew where we were—it was a young man——

POSTMASTER. R-rather handsome and well—well-dressed.

HEAD CONSTABLE. Very well-dressed—frock-

coat, white waistcoat, patent leather boots—that was walking about the room. “Hello,” says I——

POSTMASTER. No,—no, *I* said Hell——

GOVERNOR (*rising again*). Postmaster, you are a fool.

POSTMASTER. Ye-yes, yes, sir!

HEAD CONSTABLE. “Hello,” says I. “Here’s a lucky find!” Such a noble physiognomy, such a regal style, so haughty and distinguished! And when he caught sight of the Postmaster peeping behind the door——

POSTMASTER. No, no,—the Con-constable!

HEAD CONSTABLE (*brushing him aside*). And looked like this—(*imitating a majestic look*), I had a sudden presentiment, and I said, “It’s *He!*”

GOVERNOR. He? Who—what?

HEAD CONSTABLE. Why the Prince who was to come incognito.

GOVERNOR. You don’t say so! It can’t be!

HEAD CONSTABLE. It *is* though! Why, I called up Peter, and asked him privately: “Who is that young man?” I said, and Peter answered: “I don’t know who he is, but his goings-on are peculiar. When he goes out he’s a woman, and when he comes in he’s a man.” Yes, sir, and Peter said: “He’s been here a week and he takes everything on trust, and doesn’t pay a penny—and yet he sings all day long.”

GOVERNOR (*rising and walking about mopping*

his forehead). It must be the Prince! Who else could it be? Why should a man pretend to be a woman? Why should *I* pretend to be a woman?

MAYOR. I dun' know.

GOVERNOR. Why should *you* pretend to be a woman?

MAYOR. I never do, your Excellency.

GOVERNOR. When a man pretends to be a woman it's for the same reason that a widow of forty pretends to be twenty-five—she's going to drop down on some poor devil soon. And then why—why should anybody who can't pay a penny sing—*sing* all day long?

MAYOR. I give it up, sir.

GOVERNOR. It's even worse than I expected! When I first heard of this cursed incognito I thought to myself—somebody will come and tell me a distinguished-looking stranger has arrived in a yacht and put up at the Grand Hotel. But a low pot-house on the quay! In the disguise of a woman, too! Good heavens! this means something serious! (*Mops his forehead and fans himself. The others begin to groan.*) How long has he been here, do you say?

HEAD CONSTABLE. A week—a week come Wednesday.

GOVERNOR (*throwing up his hands*). A week! Long enough to hear as much about the island as will ruin everybody!

JUDGE (*taking a nip of whiskey*). Oh, dear! Oh, dear!

SENESCHAL. Yes, we shall all be sent about our businesses, and our little perquisites——

BISHOP. Heaven have mercy upon us all as sinners!

JUDGE (*takes another nip*). Oh, dear! Oh, dear! (*They all groan together—general business.*)

GOVERNOR (*standing by his chair and assuming the manner of a public speaker*). Gentlemen, let me speak. All is not yet lost. On the contrary, I might say everything has just been found. What does the proverb tell us: “To be forewarned is to be forearmed!” *We* are forewarned. We know the young Prince is on the island in disguise. What, then, ought we to do?

ALL. What, what?

GOVERNOR (*with a knowing wink*). We ought to take him by strategy.

BISHOP. Good!

SENESCHAL. Splendid!

JUDGE (*hiccupping*). Exactly what I say! Let us show him we see through his incog—(*hiccupping*)—nito.

MAYOR. What do you think—hadn't we better go down to him in a body in gala uniform?

JUDGE. Jus' so! I'll pu' on my wig and gown.

MAYOR. And I'll put on my mayoral robes and chain.

BISHOP. And I'll put on my——

GOVERNOR. Bah! Bosh! Perhaps you would like to bring up the town band, and the town crier, and the bell-man! No, no, leave this matter to me. I've had ticklish jobs before now and I've pulled them off all right. I flatter myself I know a thing or two. The Prince goes out as a woman, does he? Very well, I'll play up to his little game. He makes believe to be poor, to be nobody. All right—I'll feed him with his own sweet chaff. (*ALL laugh—GOVERNOR rings bell and calls.*) Jenkyns, order round the carriage immediately. I'll go down to the inn at once.

JUDGE. And I—I'll go with you.

GOVERNOR. No, you won't. You'll go home and souse your head and see if you can make yourself sober. You've put water in your spirits long enough; put your spirits in water for a change.

BISHOP. Quite right, but *I'll* go with you, your Excellency.

GOVERNOR. No, nor you neither. You'll go back and burn your atheistic books—fire and religion have gone together pretty well; see if fire and the other thing will do the same.

HEAD CONSTABLE. Certainly; but *I'll* go with your Excellency.

POSTMASTER. And I——

MAYOR. And me—me too.

GOVERNOR. No, none of you. You'll all go to your own departments and see that everything is right there. What does the proverb say—"Let everybody sweep before his own door and the street will be clean." So let each of you take hold of his own door—I mean his own street—hang it, no, I mean his own broom—(*Calling off.*) Jenkyns! Where's Jenkyns! Somebody run to my room, sharp, d'ye hear, and fetch my new hat and cane! Jenkyns! Jenkyns! (*He goes off. The others look at each other significantly—then come close, put their heads together and play the scene in an undertone.*)

HEAD CONSTABLE. Sh! Come here! Listen! This Governor is playing a deep game. Having found out the Prince by my instrumentality——

POSTMASTER. And mi-mine, Mr. Con-constable.

HEAD CONSTABLE. Well, yes and yours—having found out the Prince by *our* instrumentality he is going to keep him all to himself.

JUDGE. The villain!

HEAD CONSTABLE. Yes, he's going to drive up to Peter Quiggan's in fine style, with his new hat and cane, and his coachman in livery, and then it'll be (*bowing profoundly*) "Your Royal Highness" here and "your Royal Highness" there, and none of us poor officials permitted to come within fifty paces of the Prince.

JUDGE. The double-faced villain!

HEAD CONSTABLE. More than that—he is going to make complaints against us, so as to get us all dismissed, and rule the roast himself.

BISHOP. Traitor! Judas!

HEAD CONSTABLE. And when the Prince is gone he'll walk over us like a cock over a dunghill, and his head will be swelled to such a size that he'll have to use a shoe-horn to put on his hat.

ALL. The tyrant!

HEAD CONSTABLE. Sh! Don't make a noise. Shall I tell you what we ought to do? We ought to get hold of the Prince first.

JUDGE. Exactly what I say.

HEAD CONSTABLE. Yes, we ought to approach him one by one. I'll go first.

BISHOP. No, I'll go first—as Bishop, you know——

MAYOR. No, I'll go first as Mayor——

SENESCHAL. No, I'll go first as Seneschal——
(JUDGE and POSTMASTER make drunken and stuttering efforts to speak).

HEAD CONSTABLE. No, no, no! I'll go first as Head Constable. I'll—yes, I'll—that's it—(*winking all round*). I'll go on an official tour of inspection to see that all taverns and inns are properly conducted and all visitors to the Isle of Boy receive due consideration.

JUDGE (*hiccoughing*). Capital!

HEAD CONSTABLE. Then we must get up something—let me see——

MAYOR. A public address—eh?

BISHOP. Or a little testimonial, perhaps——

HEAD CONSTABLE. No, no, no. I know! He's travelling in disguise and pretends to be poor—hum! It's risky, very risky. But we certainly ought to make the attempt.

JUDGE. What attempt?

HEAD CONSTABLE (*nudging him with elbow*). You know what I mean, Judge.

JUDGE. Palm oil?

HEAD CONSTABLE. Yes, let us try a little palm oil. If the Prince takes our money——

BISHOP. As a poor traveller, of course——

HEAD CONSTABLE. Of course as a poor stranded traveller. If he takes it he will think—“How well these officials do their duty: their discipline and philanthropy is wonderful—perfectly wonderful—incredible!” And then the island is ours!

JUDGE. Capital! (*All chuckle.*)

HEAD CONSTABLE. And when this rascally Governor comes along, he can take our leavings!

JUDGE. Hurrah! (*All chuckle.*)

GOVERNOR. (*Voice of GOVERNOR within*). Jenkyns! Where the deuce is Jenkyns?

HEAD CONSTABLE. Sh! He's coming! Let's be off! Strategy indeed! Others can play at that

game, your Excellency! (*All gathering up their tall hats and creeping off on tiptoe. Grotesque business.*)

JUDGE (*taking another nip*). Drunkard indeed!

BISHOP. Atheist forsooth!

SENESCHAL. Grocer, eh?

MAYOR. Publican, if you please!

POSTMASTER. Foo-foo-fool, am I?

HEAD CONSTABLE. Sh! now! sh! (*They are all gone except POSTMASTER who is last when GOVERNOR returns.*)

GOVERNOR *brings in his cane and a hat-box—puts hat-box on the table.*

GOVERNOR. Jenky— Hello, where are the others?

POSTMASTER. Go-gone, sir!

GOVERNOR (*buttonholing him*). All the better! Look here, Postmaster, I know you. A friend in need is a friend indeed—in act and deed really. *You* are my friend, Postmaster, but those other scoundrels, I believe they've got petitions against me under their coat-tails already. (*Looking round furtively.*) Now, don't you think, Postmaster, don't you think you could keep an eye—on the Prince's correspondence during the next few days, and slightly—just slightly—open any letters—eh? For the public benefit, you know, to see if

they contained anything suspicious—anything against me, in fact—couldn't you?

POSTMASTER. Le-le-leave it to me, your Excellency! I al-always do that from pu-pure duty. I'm de-death on du-duty—and when I see—see anything sus-sus-suspicious——

GOVERNOR. Thanks, friend! Thanks! Good-bye! (*Calling.*) Jenkyns! POSTMASTER going off bumps against FOOTMAN coming in hurriedly.) Hello, Jenkyns! Where the mischief have you been hiding yourself?

FOOTMAN. Mr. William has—arrived from Cambridge, your Excellency, and I've been taking his portmanteau upstairs.

GOVERNOR (*fluttering about in excitement*). Bill? Come on that fool's errand, has he? But I've something better to think of than Master Bill! Run to the door and see if the carriage is ready. Or wait— Get me my new white gloves. There—inside the hat in the hat-box. (FOOTMAN opens hat-box, hands gloves, etc.) Now run—run to the carriage and see if the door is ready—Quick, quick! (FOOTMAN goes out hurriedly—bumps against BILL coming in, followed by his mother and sister.) Oh, it's you, is it?

BILL. Yes, dad. I've come from Cambridge expressly to speak to you.

GOVERNOR (*pulling on white gloves*). I've heard all about that, so you can save your breath

to cool your porridge. (*Going.*) I've an important matter on hand to-day—most important——

WIFE. But let the boy speak, dear.

DAUGHTER. Yes, let the poor boy speak, papa.

GOVERNOR. Well, speak, speak, speak! Who is she? What is she? Where does she come from?

BILL. She's Lesta Lily, dad.

GOVERNOR. Lest her—what?

BILL. Lesta Lily, the famous artiste. She sings, you know.

GOVERNOR. Oh, she sings, does she? And who are her family? I suppose she has a family.

BILL. Yes, dad, she has a father and a mother, a sister and a brother.

GOVERNOR. No more? Is that all the kinds she's got?

BILL. All the kinds she's got at present, dad.

GOVERNOR. And what is her father?

BILL. He sings too, dad.

GOVERNOR. Does he now? And her mother?

BILL. She sings also.

GOVERNOR. Is that so? And I suppose her brother and her sister——

BILL. Yes, they sing as well, dad.

GOVERNOR. So they all sing, do they? *You'll* sing, too, if you go any farther with this preposterous business—you'll sing small. Blockhead and bumpkin! Do you think I've lived all my life

in cotton-wool and don't know what these people are? Why didn't you tell me at once that a son of mine wanted to marry a music-hall singer?

BILL. There are music-hall singers and music-hall singers, dad. Lesta Lily is a *great* music-hall singer—but that is not all—she's a lady, a real lady.

GOVERNOR. And her father? Is he a real gentleman? And her mother—and brother and sister—are they all real ladies and gentlemen? (*Laughs contemptuously.*) Where did you meet her?

BILL. In Cambridge—she was singing at a theatre in town, and I went every night to see her.

GOVERNOR. And that's what fathers send their sons to the University for! What's a University? A place where an old fool pays while a young fool plays! Where is she now?

BILL. She's in the Isle of Boy, dad.

GOVERNOR (*with a gasp*). What? Has it gone as far as that?

BILL. I didn't bring her. She came over to play an engagement, and I thought it would be a good opportunity to introduce her to the family, so I——

GOVERNOR. You did, did you. You thought you would like to shunt the whole travelling troupe on to Government House—her father the real gentleman, and her mother the real lady, and her brother the clown, and her sister the ballet-dancer.

BILL. Say what you like, dad; whatever her family may be, Lesta Lily is a lady, a sweet, modest, refined little lady—and I love her; with all my heart and soul I love her——

GOVERNOR. Rats!

BILL.—And if I'm not allowed to marry her, I'll marry nobody else in the world.

GOVERNOR. Dare say not! Nobody else will have you. But I won't argue with you—you booby! Only don't bring your singing birds into this house, or I'll tell Jenkyns to shoot them out again—straight! *(Going off.)*

FOOTMAN *returns, takes hat out of hat-box, brushes it, and stands, holding it, by the door.*

DAUGHTER *(weeping)*. But, papa!

WIFE *(also weeping)*. Husband!

GOVERNOR *(coming back)*. Music-hall troupe, indeed! And just at the moment when we are expecting a Prince to honour us with his presence!

BILL. A prince?

GOVERNOR. Yes, sir, a prince! A royal prince! He has been on the island a week.

BILL *(bewildered)*. A week?

GOVERNOR *(mimicking him)*. Yes, a week—a week come Wednesday.

BILL *(more bewildered)*. A week come Wednesday!

GOVERNOR. Staying at Peter Quiggan's on the quay.

BILL (*with increasing bewilderment*). Peter Quiggan's on the quay!

GOVERNOR. Incognito, d'ye understand? No, you don't understand. You are too stupid! But I know a thing or two, and I've penetrated his disguise, and now I'm going to fetch him up here.

BILL (*amazed*). Fetch him up here?

GOVERNOR (*mimicking again*). Yes, fetch him up here. And your mother is getting the best spare room ready—so don't bring your mummers here, sir, while the Prince and his suite are about, or I'll pack you off along with them. (*In his excitement and confusion he picks up the hat-box in mistake for his hat.*) And don't talk to me about marrying your Filly—or Nilly—or Silly—or I'll—I'll cut you off with a shilling—a shilling, d'ye hear?—a shilling—and you'll be damned glad to get it! (GOVERNOR *puts the hat-box on his head and strides off in high dudgeon.*)

FOOTMAN (*following him*). Your Excellency! Your Excellency! That's the hat-box, not your hat!

CURTAIN

ACT II

ACT II

SCENE:—*Inside of Inn on the Quay. Dilapidated place, much out of repair—very picturesque, timbered ceilings and fireplace, old English, half-timbered style. Doors have large glass panels at top. Through windows the harbour is seen, with fishing boats, etc., and cliff (quarried) at back. Sun is shining, lower half of windows thrown up. Table on left serves first as dressing-table, then as writing-table, finally as sideboard. Piano, fireplace—two basket trunks with “L. L.” “Professional luggage” painted on them.*

Curtain rises on LESTA LILY, centre, a young lady in female dress but wearing a man’s silk hat and an eye-glass, and with a walking-cane under her arm, rehearsing a song. Her mother, a middle-aged “professional” with a mop of yellow hair is playing the piano.

LESTA. Once more, Mammie! (MOTHER plays, LESTA sings, acts the character, breaks off and piano stops.)

LESTA. No, no, that's all wrong. I know how it ought to be done. Try again, Mammie dear. (MOTHER *plays again, and again* LESTA *plays and acts.*) That'll fetch 'em, Mammie darling! But how can a girl play a man's part in a woman's frock? My wig, Mammie, and my light grey suit. (*Sits at dressing-table on left and proceeds to make up. MOTHER opens basket trunks and takes out wig, which she puts on the table, and frock coat, waistcoat, and trousers, which she shakes out one by one in view of audience and lays over the back of chairs.*)

MOTHER. Rehearse in character, indeed! Why rehearse at all, *I* say? What's the good of going on rehearsing when there's no prospect of an engagement?

LESTA (*humming a tune as she makes up*). Don't lose heart, Mammie. Daddie has gone to see the Manager of the Palace this morning—and even if that fails— Hello, here he is!

Enter ELDERLY MAN, “professionally” dressed, seedy, gloomy, and morose.

What luck, Daddie?

DADDIE. Luck! Don't talk about luck on this God-forsaken rock in the sea! Dinner served yet?

MAMMIE. It isn't going to be. This morning the landlord sent up word that he can't let us have anything more until we pay.

DADDIE. Pay! In this beastly little island they'll give you nothing without you *pay*. It's simply disgusting! Deuce take it, I'm hungry. I took a stroll along the front, thinking my appetite would go. But not a bit of it. I'm as ravenous as ever. See if there's any tobacco in the pouch, mammie.

MOTHER. Tobacco? You smoked the last two days ago, and the tobacconist says you can't have any more unless you pay.

DADDIE. Pay, pay, pay! I'm sick of the word pay. You would think that it was the only word in the English language, the way it monopolises some people's conversation.

LESTA (*still making up*). Ring for the waiter, Daddie.

DADDIE (*tugging at bell rope*). I'll have to do something—there's a noise in my inside like the trumpeters at the Tower.

Enter WAITER, untidy, insolent.

Ah, good day, my friend! And how are we now, eh?

WAITER. Pretty well, thank you!

DADDIE. Business going nicely?

WAITER. Middling nicely.

DADDIE. Plenty of visitors?

WAITER. Plenty.

DADDIE. Just so. Look here, my friend, we haven't had our dinner brought in yet. Just hurry them up in the kitchen, won't you?

WAITER. But there isn't any dinner.

DADDIE. Isn't any? What nonsense!

WAITER. Well, there is some, and there isn't!

DADDIE. How so?

WAITER. Only for the gentlemen as *pays*.

DADDIE (*to LESTA*). Upon my soul, this is getting monotonous.

WAITER. The landlord says he'll give you no more until you settles up.

DADDIE. But you reason with him, my friend—talk him over—speak seriously to him. We are bona fide travellers, and if other people are eating, hang it all, why shouldn't we?

WAITER. More than that—he says he doesn't believe you are h'artistes at all, but a family of sharpers—the sort that comes to a 'otel and makes theirselves at home and runs up a bill, and then you can't get rid of 'em.

DADDIE. The scoundrel! Did he say that? I'll have him up for libel and slander! I'll brief the best lawyer in the land, and if——

WAITER. And if you don't pay within twenty-four hours he says he'll send for the Head Constable and have you clapped in the Town Gaol.

(*Exit* WAITER.)

DADDIE. There's gratitude for you! You pat-

ronise the man's greasy hostelry, and he talks of the Town Gaol! (*Putting his head out of door and shouting after waiter.*) Hello, there! Your landlord is a thief and a scoundrel, and I should like to tell him so to his teeth.

LESTA (*still quietly making up*). Go down and see the landlord yourself, Daddie.

DADDIE. Good Lord! What do I want to see him for?

LESTA. Tell him it will all come right presently, and then he'll be sorry if he has made trouble.

DADDIE. I'm sick of this sort of life, though, and don't know why the deuce I came.

(*Exit DADDIE.*)

MAMMIE (*on chair, centre*). Don't know why he came! I do. Because a foolish girl has fallen in love with a foolish boy, and they expect the world to stand still, or go round the other way while they bill and coo. But Nature don't copy its style from a dime novel. The young man is a Cambridge undergraduate, and his father is Governor of the Isle of Boy, while you are a variety artiste—and don't imagine anybody is going to forget it. (LESTA *hums and sings* "*My face is my fortune*," *etc.*)

MAMMIE. Is it? Perhaps it is, but people don't take securities on face-value nowadays. Even if the boy's fine friends would allow him to marry *you*, do you suppose they want him to marry *me*,

or daddie, or Joey, or little Tilda? Put the boy out of your mind, Lesta, stick to our profession, work hard and make a hit.

LESTA (*rising, putting her arms round her mother's neck from behind*). I'm going to make the biggest hit of my life, Mammie.

MAMMIE. Where and when?

LESTA. Just here and now. Bill would have married me without asking anybody's consent, but it wouldn't have been fair to his father or to himself or to me, or to Mammie—and I wouldn't hear of it for a minute. He and I are doing a dangerous thing, I know, but then love is a flower that often grows in dangerous places, and sometimes it flourishes on the rocks, when it won't blow in the sheltered garden. Don't be afraid, Mammie! I'm not! Bill is to cross to-day and to see his father this afternoon, and to-morrow we'll be as happy as the day is long.

Enter MESSENGER BOY in bicycle uniform.

MESSENGER BOY. Miss Lesta Lily, Miss!

LESTA (*eagerly*). Letter for me? (*Exit BOY.*) From Bill! (*Tearing it open*). "Darling Lesta, I've just arrived and seen the Governor"— He has seen his father, Mammie, and writes at once to tell us all about it. "Am sorry to say he has cut up rough. Before I could get the words out

of my mouth he flew into a rage, said insulting things about music-hall people in general, and threatened if I brought you here to turn both of us out of the house. So your sweet little scheme for gaining his consent— And now he has gone post haste to your own hotel—having some crazy idea that a Prince, travelling in disguise— (*Falters, stops, breaks down, sits centre, covers her face and sobs*).

MAMMIE (*putting her arms about LESTA's neck from behind*). Never mind, little girlie! Never mind! The old fool doesn't know what he's doing. But his loss will be our gain. We'll leave the island to-morrow and it will be all one in a hundred years, you know.

Re-enter DADDIE in great excitement, clapping his hands.

DADDIE. Here's a go! The Head Constable is asking for Lesta!

MAMMIE. Then the brute of a landlord *has* sent for him!

DADDIE. It isn't that. Such larks! Such an adventure!

MAMMIE. What adventure?

DADDIE. Sh! Sh! The Governor of the Island received information this morning that young Prince Henry was to come incognito to the Isle of Boy. So not to be caught napping the sly old dog

sent his Head Constable round the Inns and Hotels to see if by chance the Prince had arrived already.

MAMMIE. Well? (*LESTA uncovering her face runs through her letter again.*)

DADDIE. Well, it seems the Constable came here also, and catching a glimpse of Lesta rehearsing in—in these (*snatching up trousers and holding them out*) he jumped to the conclusion, for some reason, that she was the Prince travelling in disguise.

MAMMIE. What nonsense!

DADDIE. The Governor believes it, though, and he is coming to see her.

MAMMIE. The Governor coming to see Lesta?

DADDIE. The Governor and all his satellites.

MAMMIE. Well, I declare!

DADDIE. More than that, the landlord has fallen into the trap too, and we are to have as much dinner as we please. Dinner, dinner, dinner! (*Clapping his hands and capering round.*)

MAMMIE. What's to be done about it?

DADDIE. Done about it? Eat it, of course, before the fools find out their mistake.

MAMMIE. But what's to be done about the Governor when he comes to see Lesta under the impression that she's the Prince in disguise?

LESTA (*leaping up with face full of resolution*). Fool him to the top of his bent—that's what's to be done?

MAMMIE. Lesta!

LESTA. He insulted me, didn't he,—he said I wasn't fit to marry his son, and if I crossed his threshold he would turn me out of doors.

DADDIE. He did?

LESTA. Very well, he shall take me over his threshold himself. He shall go down on his knees to me.

MAMMIE. My goodness! You don't mean you'll pretend you are the Prince?

LESTA. Certainly, I will! We all will! Fortune has thrown these people into our hands, with their mare's nest and moonshine, and we are not mummers if we are incapable of mummary.

DADDIE. Good, great, glorious! Count me in every time. Let me see; I'll be your valet—no, I'll be—that's it, I'll be your father, the King.

LESTA. You'll be my equerry and friend—And, Mammie——

DADDIE. I know—Mammie will be your Lady of the Bedchamber—I mean your Lady in Waiting—I mean—h'm—Mammie's the difficulty, isn't she?

LESTA. Mammie will be *your* wife, and *my* old nurse.

DADDIE. Splendid!

MAMMIE. Goodness me! But if the real Prince should come in the meantime?

LESTA. Let him! The present is ours—we'll work it for all it's worth. (*Gathering up male attire*). Come along Mammie! Help me to get into this flummery! I know what it is to be a woman—let me feel what it is to be a man! I know what it is to be poor and insignificant—let me find out what it is to be rich and great! To be a woman and to be poor as the world goes is to be courted and degraded, flattered, and shamed—to stand in a market-place where you *pay* but are never *paid*—to be present at a feast where you *serve* but may not be *served*—to be low enough for man's lust but not high enough for his love! Oh, I don't know whose fault it is, but it's wicked and cruel and unjust, and now I'm going to be revenged! (*Breaks into hysterical laughter, and, singing and goes in, followed by MAMMIE*). (*Knocking at door, R.*)

DADDIE. The Satellites!

LESTA (*putting her head in at door, L.*). I hear them coming. Gull them, fool them; bleed them, fleece them, Daddie. (*Her head goes in.*)

DADDIE. Sh! Now for business! (*Straightening himself up and assuming a high style*). Come in!

Enter HEAD CONSTABLE in full uniform. In lisping he pronounces "s" as "th."

HEAD CONSTABLE. Your master is not at home apparently?

DADDIE. Always at home to you, Colonel. He'll be out presently.

HEAD CONSTABLE. Thanks! (*Aside*). Suppose I must begin to use palm oil here! (*Aloud, slipping coin into DADDIE's hand*). Tell me, my good man, what *is* your master?

DADDIE. What *is* he?

HEAD CONSTABLE. I mean what is his rank?

DADDIE. His rank? Oh, the *usual* rank.

HEAD CONSTABLE. (*Aside*.) One must be a little bolder with *this* gentleman. (*Aloud*.) He's a—a—general, isn't he?

DADDIE. A general? (*Contemptuously*.) Did you say a general?

HEAD CONSTABLE. Is he higher than a general then?

DADDIE. Oh, much higher.

HEAD CONSTABLE (*aside*). I knew it! (*Aloud*.) So you're having a little tour together, are you?

DADDIE. Decidedly—undoubtedly. We're having a little tour.

HEAD CONSTABLE. A private tour, eh?

DADDIE. Oh, strictly private!

HEAD CONSTABLE (*aside*). How close we are! But the rascal will soon melt under *my* management. (*Aloud*.) Tell me now, what does your master pay most attention to on his little private tours?

DADDIE. Well, to tell you the truth, he seems to me to pay most attention to the police.

HEAD CONSTABLE (*alarmed*). The police!

DADDIE. He's fond of asking questions and finding out all about them.

HEAD CONSTABLE (*aside*). Lord save us!

DADDIE. But most of all he likes being well entertained.

HEAD CONSTABLE. Well entertained?

DADDIE. That is to say he likes his *servants* to be well entertained. Coming away from an island like this, he'll say, "Well, Sidney," that's my name—"Well, Sid," he'll say—"have they treated you well?" "Shabbily, your Highness," I'll say. "Remind me of that when we get back to London," he'll say. And then it's God help that poor island and everybody in it!

HEAD CONSTABLE (*terrified*). Good Lord! you don't say so! (*Taking out his pocket-book.*) He doesn't mind putting up at an old hotel like this though?

DADDIE. No, he doesn't mind putting up at a frousy, grousy old hotel like this.

HEAD CONSTABLE (*slipping bank-note into DADDIE'S hand*). But that's all part of the game, perhaps, eh, Sidney, eh?

DADDIE (*taking it*). Yes, that's all part of the game, perhaps, eh, Colonel, eh? (*They nudge each*

other with the elbow, wink and laugh immoderately.)

In the midst of their laughter LESTA enters, dressed in male attire and assuming the character of the PRINCE.

LESTA. Here I am at last!

DADDIE (*aside, pocketing the bank-note*). H'm! He needn't have been in such a deuce of a hurry, though! (*Exit DADDIE, R.*)

HEAD CONSTABLE (*with great trepidation*). I have the honour to present myself: I am Head Constable of the Isle of Boy.

LESTA. Ah, how d'ye do? Take a seat.

HEAD CONSTABLE. It is my duty, as Head Constable, to take all due measures to prevent visitors from suffering inconvenience. Therefore, if you have anything to complain of in this place——

LESTA. Nothing whatever! True, the house is not all that one may have been used to, the attendance leaves something to be desired, and the food—— Well, yes, the food——

HEAD CONSTABLE (*gathering confidence*). Or if you are in temporary want of funds, I am ready to oblige you, because it is——ahem!——my duty to assist visitors.

LESTA. Did you say funds? Well, since you are so kind, it *would* perhaps——

HEAD CONSTABLE (*handing a roll of notes*).

Say no more, sir—say no more! Don't trouble to count it. (*Aside.*) There, thank Heaven! He has taken my money.

LESTA. Thanks, very much! I must say I am very much struck by the open-heartedness and generosity of the officials in this island, and when I get back to London——

HEAD CONSTABLE (*eagerly*). Ah, you are too good! It is easy to see you are an exceptional visitor, a *most* exceptional visitor, and if—if—when you return to London, the King should ever speak of the Isle of Boy, perhaps you will say, "May it please your Majesty, that is the island where the police—the *police* always do their duty!"

LESTA. Certainly! I shall be happy! I like the company of the police. Some people don't agree with me, but what would society be without the police? Am I not right?

HEAD CONSTABLE. Absolutely right, sir! (*Backing out.*) Pardon me, troubling you further with my presence.

LESTA. Don't mention it!

HEAD CONSTABLE (*aside*). Hurrah! The island's ours! (*Exit HEAD CONSTABLE.*)

Re-enter DADDIE, stifling his laughter.

LESTA. How do you like it, Daddie?

DADDIE. Rare! But there's another of 'em coming! Hush!—he's here!

*Enter JUDGE, in wig and gown, with bank-notes
crushed in his hand.*

(Exit DADDIE.)

JUDGE (*aside*). Oh, lord! How my knees knock together! (*Steadying himself against table, centre, and speaking with difficulty.*) Your Ex—I mean your High—your Royal—I have the honour to present myself: I am the Judge of the Isle of Boy.

LESTA. Ah! Take a seat!

JUDGE. Hearing from the Head Constable that an exceptional visitor has arrived—I came to pay my respects——

LESTA. Quite right! I'm very fond of agreeable company. But pray be seated.

JUDGE (*still steadying himself by table*). Thanks! I can very well stand.

LESTA. No ceremony—I beg! I entreat! (*JUDGE makes a dive for a chair and sprawls into it.*)

LESTA. So you are the Judge of the Isle of Boy! You find it profitable, I daresay, being Judge here?

JUDGE (*alarmed*). Profitable?

LESTA. Such a sober and well-principled people, you know! I should think they must leave you nothing to do.

JUDGE (*aside*). Oh, Lord! somebody has been and told him.

LESTA. Nothing but to spend your time and your salary in enjoying yourself.

JUDGE (*slips off chair on to his knees*). Your Ex-ex-ex—your High—your Royal High—
(*Gasps.*)

LESTA. What's the matter?

JUDGE (*hiccoughing*). Have pity on me! Don't ruin me! Only give me time to repent. I have a wife and small children—Judge for yourself, sir, the salary I get is hardly sufficient for bread and cheese, and how can I spend it in drink?

LESTA. Certainly you can't!

JUDGE. It's all the lying of that Governor.

LESTA. What a shame!

JUDGE (*hiccoughing*). He says I'm sometimes speechless on the bench.

LESTA. What nonsense! And you with such a marvellous flow of language, too! But what have you got in your hand there?

JUDGE. Noth-nothing, sir.

LESTA (*helping him up*). Why, it's money! Look here, lend it to me. I've run a little short, but as soon as I get back to London, I'll return it to you.

JUDGE. It's quite unnecessary—the *honour* of lending to your Ex—I mean your High— In fact, I spend all my salary on distinguished visitors, one way and another.

LESTA. I'm sure you do.

JUDGE (*rising with difficulty*). Excuse my intrusion, sir.

LESTA. Don't mention it, Judge. I like the society of lawyers. What would the world be without lawyers, I say? They're not like the police, who are all scoundrels, or like the clergy, who are all hypocrites. They are so generous, so sincere. Am I not right, Judge?

JUDGE. Quite right, your Ex-ex-lency! (*Aside.*) Hur— (*hiccough*) rah! The island's ours! (*Makes a plunge for the door and falls through it headlong.*)

Re-enter DADDIE, choking with laughter.

DADDIE. Oh, I shall burst! But there's another of 'em coming! The last was a gull, this is a raven! Sh!

Enter the BISHOP, in full costume.

(Exit DADDIE.)

BISHOP. I have the honour to present myself: I am Bishop of the Isle of Boy.

LESTA. You're welcome! Take a seat! People think me eccentric, but I like the company of Bishops! Some say the clergy are all hypocrites, but I don't agree with them. They're not like lawyers, who would sell their souls for sixpence. A clergyman's soul shines in his face. Isn't it so, Bishop?

BISHOP. Quite true, sir.

LESTA. And so you live here always?

BISHOP. Alas, sir, that is my fate.

LESTA. Well, I like this island of yours. But perhaps this is the case described by the poet: "where every prospect pleases and only man is vile——"

BISHOP. Absolutely correct, sir—it is the Governor in this island that is vile.

LESTA. Is it possible?

BISHOP. There never was such a governor, sir. He makes everybody wallow at his feet.

LESTA. What a scoundrel!

BISHOP. More than that, he is always stealing off to Paris, and Heaven only knows what he does when he gets *there*.

LESTA. My! He must be a regular blackguard!

BISHOP. And then his family, which ought to be an example to everybody, is simply the talk of the island.

LESTA. You don't say so?

BISHOP. His wife and daughter turn up their noses at our wives and daughters, and as for his son——

LESTA. His son?

BISHOP. He has a son at Cambridge, who is going to marry an actress.

LESTA. You don't say so?

BISHOP. It's true! A mere music-hall singer.

LESTA. Why, they're neither more nor less than a family of impostors!

BISHOP. Quite right, sir. Hadn't I better put it all down on paper, so that you can take it away with you?

LESTA. Do, by all means. I shall be very glad to have it.

BISHOP (*rising*). Thanks! I will not presume to occupy your time any longer.

LESTA. Don't mention it! All you've told me is very amusing! By the way, a very funny thing has happened to me. I've somehow cleaned myself out in coming here. You couldn't now—could you?

BISHOP (*diving into his pockets under his apron*). Of course! I shall count it a great happiness! I always keep a little about me for the purpose. Delighted to oblige you.

LESTA. Thanks very much!

BISHOP (*aside*). The Lord be praised! The Island's ours! (*Backs out, bowing profoundly, bumps against DADDIE, coming in. BISHOP falls face forward on his hands, gathers himself up with wounded dignity and goes. Exit.*)

DADDIE. Oh! I shall die of laughing! But there are three more officials coming.

LESTA. Three more! Seems to me there are a good many officials in this island. Are they all officials?

DADDIE. Sh! Here they are!

Enter the MAYOR, the SENESCHAL, and the POSTMASTER. MAYOR in his red robes and chain, with cocked hat; SENESCHAL and POSTMASTER in evening dress. SENESCHAL carries a roll tied with red ribbon. POSTMASTER carries a silver salver.

MAYOR. I have the honour to present myself!
I am the Mayor of this town.

SENESCHAL. And I am the Seneschal of this isle.

POSTMASTER (*stammering*). And I—I—I—I
am the pos—post—postmaster.

LESTA. Happy to see you! Be seated, gentlemen, be seated.

MAYOR. But our rank is not high enough.

LESTA. Never mind! I don't care to stand on my dignity. Pray sit down. (*They sit nervously.*)

MAYOR. Hearing that an illustrious visitor has arrived, and that he was so gracious as to express himself to the Bishop on the subject of the Governor——

SENESCHAL. Who so grievously and unjustly oppresses us——

MAYOR. Calling us publicans——

SENESCHAL. And quacks——

POSTMASTER. And foo—foo—fools!

MAYOR. We ventured to bring a little petition praying for his summary and immediate removal.

LESTA. Quite right—let me see it. (*Taking*

roll from SENESCHAL: *opening and muttering the first lines*) "To His Imperial Highness—your petitioners humbly pray—" Is it signed?

MAYOR. Yes, sir, by every official on the island.

LESTA. Good! I'll not read it at present, though! Keep it for the journey home. I like to read something amusing when I'm bored. But what have you got there?

POSTMASTER. A lit—lit—little testi—testi—monial.

MAYOR. We thought if your Highness would aid us in our prayer——

LESTA. Ah, no! Don't imagine that: I never accept presents for public services. But if you cared to offer me a trifling loan of, say, a couple of hundred pounds—just by way of showing your confidence—*that* would be quite another matter! (*The Three Men rise in alarm and make signs at each other behind LESTA's back.*) But perhaps you haven't so much about you. Well, if you haven't two hundred, let us say—ten.

SENESCHAL (*rummaging in his pockets*). Have you got ten, Mr. Mayor?

MAYOR. I've only one left.

SENESCHAL. And I've only half a sovereign!

POSTMASTER. And I—I've only ha—ha—half a crown!

LESTA. Very well, let it be thirty-two and six, then! I'll do with that! (*Takes money.*)

POSTMASTER (*offering salver*). Take the tr—tr—tray also! Ple—ple—please.

DADDIE (*aside, tugging at her coat-tails*). Take it, you fool—take it!

LESTA. Well, if you wish it—merely as a matter of form, remember!

MAYOR, POSTMASTER, SENESCHAL (*together, POSTMASTER'S stutter coming last*). Pardon us for troubling you with our presence!

LESTA. Don't mention it! It's a pleasure! Come to see me again! Often! Very often! (*Conducts them to door. They go off with solemn reverence.*)

DADDIE (*suffocating with suppressed laughter*). Oh, let out my sides! Let out my sides!

LESTA (*also rolling with laughter*). Did you see old stick-in-the-mud in the gold chain?

DADDIE. And the old geeser in the glasses?

LESTA. And the stut—stut—stutterer! (*They drop into seats right and left and rock with laughter.*)

DADDIE. What a set of flats they are!

LESTA. And what a pack of rascals!

DADDIE. What fun when they find themselves deluded!

LESTA. Meantime they've served our turn beautifully. Here is their money and there is their petition against the Governor signed by every man of them. If when the Governor comes he continues to

be impossible, let him look out for trouble! But if he is willing to come to terms, and the only difficulty is this wrangling, slandering crew of back-biters and blackmailers, let them on their part look out for me. They might as well go and hang themselves as have the Governor know anything of this (*indicating money*) and this (*indicating petition*). I must write to Bill before his father comes. Ink and paper, quick, quick! (*Sits at side-table and writes at frantic speed.*)

DADDIE. Very good! I'll send it off by the landlord! (*Calling off.*) Hi there, mate! You've got to take a letter to the post, and give it to the Postmaster himself and tell him to send it by special messenger to Government House. D'ye hear me, Government House! Look alive there! Stop, the letter isn't ready yet.

LESTA (*writing*). Bill will die of laughing over this.

Enter WAITER, very subservient.

WAITER. The landlord's compliments, sir, and please may I lay the table?

DADDIE. Lay away, little cock-a-doodle! You might have done so if you'd only mentioned it!

(WAITER *proceeds to lay table in great hurry.*)

LESTA (*putting letter in envelope*). There, that will do!

DADDIE. Right you are! (*Going off with letter.*) Look here, young 'un! You're a smart chap—just get us something to eat while we're waiting for dinner.

WAITER. But there ain't nothing good enough for the likes of you—only plain stuff—till your master and the Governor is done.

DADDIE. Well, but what plain stuff have you got ready?

WAITER. Only roast beef and potatoes and pastry.

DADDIE. Never mind! It doesn't matter! I'll eat it all. (*Exit DADDIE with WAITER. As they go out, they cross the LANDLORD, backing in and bowing before the GOVERNOR.*)

LANDLORD. His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor! (*Exit LANDLORD.*)

LESTA. Ah, how d'ye do, your Excellency! Take a seat!

GOVERNOR (*aside*). What a charming young man! What refinement of manners! One can see at a glance he belongs to royalty. (*Aloud.*) Going my rounds in the performance of my duty, I dropped in casually—quite casually, to ascertain whether all visitors were being well entertained.

LESTA. I am greatly obliged to you. Your officials have been here already on the same errand!

GOVERNOR (*aside*). The rascals! So they've stolen a march on me, have they? (*Aloud.*) Ah,

yes, of course, certainly! I sent them on ahead of me, because I am not like other Governors who never attend to their business. And lo! as a reward for my pains, the occasion has presented itself of making this agreeable acquaintance.

LESTA. Quite so! I am too delighted! Without the kind assistance of your officials I confess I don't know what I should have done. To tell you the truth, I couldn't pay my bill.

GOVERNOR (*aside*). Couldn't pay his bill! Oh, yes, fib away!

LESTA. I daresay you think I am some distinguished visitor. On the contrary, I'm only a variety artiste.

GOVERNOR (*aside*). Only a variety artiste! Well, he *is* a fine hand at spinning yarns!

LESTA. Yes, and my father before me was a variety artist also!

GOVERNOR (*aside*). Just observe how he romances! And drags in his old father too!

LESTA. We came over to the Isle of Boy to get an engagement and got broke—stony broke!

GOVERNOR (*aside*). And he doesn't even blush! He wants his incognito kept up! Good, we'll talk a little nonsense too! (*Aloud.*) Ah, but that makes no difference! Rich or poor, great or small! It's all one to me! Yes, out of pure Christian philanthropy, apart from duty, I am determined to see that any visitor to this island is well treated.

Any other Governor, to be sure, would look to his own advantage, but, believe me, when I lie down to rest my sole prayer is: "May His Majesty hear of my zeal and be satisfied." He may, or may not, reward me. That is as he pleases, but at any rate, my conscience is clear. I long for no honours! They are, no doubt, alluring, but to the upright—all dust and ashes—ahem! all dust and ashes!

LESTA. Quite true. I'm fond of spouting a little too!

Enter DADDIE followed by WAITER with dinner.

But won't you join me at dinner?

GOVERNOR. With the greatest pleasure in life! (*Aside.*) How delightful he is! What deportment! What style!

DADDIE (*aside to LESTA*). The satellites are here still!

LESTA (*aside to DADDIE*). Where?

DADDIE (*aside to LESTA*). Listening under the window. (*GOVERNOR and LESTA sit at table; WAITER serves; DADDIE stands, l.*)

GOVERNOR. Yes, I'm only too glad to labour in the service of the island, but I venture to point out to you what a head-splitting business the office of Governor is! And when you've got bad officials too——

LESTA (*loudly*). Bad officials?

GOVERNOR. Yes, sir, such is my misfortune.
(*The tops of the hats of the OFFICIALS are visible bobbing up and down under the open window.*)
There is my Head Constable, for example——

LESTA (*loudly*). The Head Constable!

GOVERNOR. A rascal, sir, a long, lanky, lisping rascal! (*The head of the HEAD CONSTABLE bobs up and down at back with a look of horror.*) And there is the Bishop!

LESTA (*loudly*). The Bishop!

GOVERNOR. A bare-faced hypocrite! He doesn't know the Lord's Prayer yet—he is always making collections, and where the money goes to God only knows! (*The head of the BISHOP goes up and down.*) And then the Judge!

LESTA (*loudly*). The Judge!

GOVERNOR. A doddering old drunken dunce, sir! (*The head of the JUDGE goes up and down.*)

GOVERNOR. And then the Mayor and the Postmaster and the Seneschal, how Heaven allows such cursed old scamps to live—— (*The heads of MAYOR, POSTMASTER, and SENESCHAL bob up and down.*)

LESTA. Well, I declare! I never should have thought it!

GOVERNOR. Yes, sir! You may toil for your country's good, you may lie awake at nights, but when you've got the whole island on your own shoulders——

LESTA. I feel for you. But, tell me, is it *all* work with you in the Isle of Boy? Have you no amusements? No theatres, no music-halls?

GOVERNOR (*aside*). Oho, my young friend, I know what you're getting at! (*Aloud.*) Theatres and music-halls? God forbid! We haven't a theatre in the island, and as for a music-hall, we've never even heard of such a thing! It *did* once happen that somebody came to me and proposed Nigger Minstrels, but I forbade it instantly, and I remember I had a nightmare the night after. Lord forgive 'em—how can people waste precious time over such frivolities.

DADDIE (*aside*). Rats! (*As the dishes are going out DADDIE seizes them and helps himself.*)

LESTA. Well, I don't quite agree with you though. It all depends how you look at it.

GOVERNOR. Oh, certainly, certainly!

LESTA. Don't say theatres and music-halls are not good now and then——

GOVERNOR. No doubt, no doubt——

LESTA. For my part I'm very fond of them. I own they're one of my weaknesses. Not the only one though—for instance, I'm rather susceptible to the charms of the fair sex—aren't you?

GOVERNOR. I? Well, now that you speak of it——

LESTA. Come now, when you're in Paris, eh?

GOVERNOR. Oh, Paris? Well, perhaps in Paris——

LESTA (*loudly*). Aha, you're blushing! Don't get out of it *that* way. Confess now— You know all the pretty actresses, don't you?

GOVERNOR. Sh! Sh! For Heaven's sake! I'm a married man!

LESTA. Oho! A married man! And tell me, have you any children?

GOVERNOR. To be sure I have—two of 'em—both grown up!

LESTA. You don't say so!—grown up! What are their names?

GOVERNOR. Agatha, the girl, and William, the boy—we call him Bill.

LESTA. Really! You call him Bill! I daresay Bill is fond of the pretty actresses, too?

GOVERNOR. You may well say so. Why, he wants to *marry* one of 'em.

LESTA. Is it possible?

GOVERNOR. Yes, sir; a common music-hall singer. The booby says she's a lady—a real lady.

LESTA (*kissing her hand aside*). Bless him!

GOVERNOR. And if I don't let him marry her he'll marry nobody else.

LESTA. But—this is shocking! To go to Paris occasionally, and be on a nice friendly footing with a mere singer, that's one thing; but to want to marry her—that's another thing altogether.

GOVERNOR. It is!

LESTA. Tell me, who is she? Some trollop, I suppose?

GOVERNOR. He calls her Filly—Nilly—Silly—or something.

LESTA. Is it Lily? Lesta Lily?

GOVERNOR. The very name. You know her, then?

LESTA. Of course I do! A regular—tut!

GOVERNOR. I thought as much!

LESTA. I feel for you, my friend! More than that, I'll help you!

GOVERNOR. You will—you'll deign to help me?

LESTA. The boy is fascinated. I'll disillusionise him. He thinks there's nobody in the world like Lesta Lily.

GOVERNOR. He does.

LESTA. But I can do everything she can do—sing all her songs, dance all her dances, just as well as she ever did them, and better—fifty times better!

GOVERNOR. Well? Well?

LESTA. Well, I'll do them wherever you like to-morrow night, and so break his idol to bits.

GOVERNOR (*laughing and clapping his hands*). Splendid! Magnificent! I'll be your debtor forever!

LESTA. It's nothing—nothing at all! But remember, nobody must know who I am!

GOVERNOR. Oh, nobody—nobody but ourselves.

And may I venture to ask—but no, I am unworthy!

LESTA. What do you mean?

GOVERNOR. If I might be so bold—I have a charming little room at Government House—but no, I feel it would be too great an honour.

LESTA. On the contrary, I accept it with pleasure. My equerry and his wife, too—they will be happy to accept your hospitality also.

GOVERNOR. I shall be too delighted.

LESTA (*rising*). Hi, waiter, bring me my bill—quick! (*Exit WAITER.*)

Equerry, pack my trunks—immediately.

DADDIE. Right you are, my High Nobility.

(*Exit DADDIE.*)

LESTA (*to GOVERNOR*). No time like the present—we'll go at once. (*Goes in, singing and dancing. You hear her singing behind scenes until she reappears.*)

GOVERNOR (*alone*). Aha! I've bagged the big prize! And now, won't I pepper the gentlemen who tried to steal a march on me! The peddling hucksters! The swaggering, bumptious, blowing blackguards! (*He turns up stage, and at the same moment the figures of the OFFICIALS in a line rise simultaneously behind windows, and look at him with silent, grim, and reproachful faces.*)

GOVERNOR (*in alarm*). What are you all doing there? You've not been listening to my private

conversation? Impossible! You're gentlemen, real gentlemen——

HEAD CONSTABLE. On the contrary, we're long, lanky, lisping rascals, your Excellency!

JUDGE. And doddering, drunken dunces!

BISHOP. And bare-faced hypocrites!

MAYOR. And peddling hucksters!

POSTMASTER. And spy-spy-spy-spying sneaks!

GOVERNOR (*in a frightened undertone*). Sh! Sh! D'ye want to ruin everything? Look here, if you'll hold your tongues I'll ask you to Government House to-morrow night—you and all your wives! There! Sh! He's coming back! (*LESTA's singing is heard approaching and the figures of the OFFICIALS go down again.*)

Enter LESTA in overcoat, and tall hat, with cane, etc., followed by LANDLORD and WAITER—Last of all, DADDIE and MAMMIE, dressed for the street. MAMMIE looks frightened, DADDIE is lighting a very big cigar.

LANDLORD (*to LESTA—opening paper*). You were pleased to ask for——

LESTA. Ah, the bill! Of course! Equerry, see to this little matter—I can never make anything of their stupid accounts.

GOVERNOR. Please don't let it bother you! (*To LANDLORD.*) Get out of this—the money will be sent.

LESTA. Yes, of course—that will be best.
(LANDLORD and WAITER come down R. and L. and shoulder basket-trunks.)

GOVERNOR (to LESTA). Do you propose to ride in your carriage, or will you go with me in mine?

LESTA. I prefer to go with you in yours.

GOVERNOR. Delighted! Charmed! Enraptured! Do me the honour——

(Makes way for LESTA who goes out first in high style, singing as before and followed by GOVERNOR. The LANDLORD and WAITER are about to go next when DADDIE intervenes with a lofty gesture, offers his arm to MAMMIE and goes off with a majestic stride, puffing his big cigar. LANDLORD and WAITER are following with the dilapidated luggage on their shoulders when the heads of the OFFICIALS rise behind to look after the retiring company and the Curtain falls.)

ACT III.

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SCENE:—*The Gardens at Government House. Mansion on r. with steps down from a terrace. Garden and other seats right and left. In centre a tent or grotto, which can be used as a retiring room, and lit up from within. A few chairs for orchestra on terrace. Trees forming arch at back, with fairy-lamps hanging from them. Back cloth representing the sea. The action begins in sunshine, goes on to deep sunset, followed by moonlight and ends with the fairy-lamps burning.*

GOVERNOR'S WIFE and DAUGHTER come out of house, in evening dress, with light wraps for garden.

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. There, Agatha, there's a man for you! That's what I call a man! Never—never before have I been in the presence of such a charming young man. I'm passionately fond of young men like that. Where's Bill, I wonder?

DAUGHTER. Not back yet, apparently.

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. How tiresome!

DAUGHTER. When papa went off for the Prince, Bill went off for a walk—to walk off his disappointment, I suppose.

Enter BILL L. in walking dress.

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. Oh, here he is! Bill, I'm surprised at you! How can you permit your personal feelings to overcome you at a moment like this? Don't you know what has happened?

BILL. What?

GOVERNOR'S WIFE (*in a whisper*). His Royal Highness has come!

BILL (*loudly*). His Royal Highness?

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. The same that was mentioned in the letter to your father. But incognito, you know, so we're to pretend we don't know who he is.

BILL. And do we?

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. Certainly! You can see at a glance he must be a Prince. Such manners, such dignified ways! At first your father thought there was going to be trouble; but, thank the Lord, everything's all right now. The Prince has accepted our hospitality and we've just had dinner. Now he has gone in to prepare for the private theatricals with which he promised to entertain our people.

BILL. Private theatricals?

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. Well, songs, recitations, imitations—I don't know what they are, but your father wishes you to see them and he sent us out to find you. So run—run to your room and dress; the Prince will begin presently.

BILL. But tell me—what's he like—this Prince—young or old?

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. Oh, young, very young, only two or three and twenty.

BILL. Tall?

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. Quite tall.

DAUGHTER. Mamma, dear, he's short—as short as I am.

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. Of course, you *must* contradict. He's tall. You're *told* he's tall—he's as tall as your mother.

BILL. Is he dark or fair?

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. Dark.

DAUGHTER. No, fair.

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. Well, dark *and* fair.

BILL (*eagerly*). Auburn hair?

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. Exactly: dark auburn, and his eyes——

BILL (*more eagerly*). They're brown, aren't they?

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. No, blue—deep blue.

DAUGHTER. Mamma, they're brown—I looked at them myself.

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. And *they* looked at *me*, miss—indeed I noticed that the Prince kept looking at me all through dinner.

DAUGHTER. Oh, mamma, he kept looking at *me*!

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. Get along with your rubbish—your remarks are quite improper.

DAUGHTER. But, mamma, he did, he really did.

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. There you are—*arguing* again! *When* did he look at you, pray?

DAUGHTER. When he said I must surely resemble my brother he gazed at me the whole time.

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. Well, perhaps he did look at you once or twice, but that was only for the sake of appearances. (*Voice of GOVERNOR outside, "Rubina."*) There, (*to BILL*) there's your father; run away and return quickly.

BILL (*going, aside*). The Prince—twenty-three—auburn hair—brown eyes—songs—imitations! Oh, my head's going round like a windmill!
(*Exit BILL, R.*)

Enter GOVERNOR from House.

GOVERNOR. Bill got back?

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. Yes, dear; the boy's gone up to dress and will be down presently.

GOVERNOR (*mopping his forehead*). Oh, Lord, I haven't got over my fright yet!

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. Why, what is there to be frightened about?

GOVERNOR. That's just like a woman! A big-wig comes down on you like a bolt out of the blue, and she asks what is there to be frightened about!

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. Well, I see nothing in the Prince but a nice, polished, polite young gentleman, and if there was ever any danger of trouble, thank heaven it's all over.

GOVERNOR. Yes, yes, but it's a queer world for all that. You ought to be able to recognise great people by their distinguished appearance, but you can't, you can't! There's the Prince, a mere strip-ling! And there's that old equerry, he drank so much at dinner and gave vent to such allegories and ambiguities that I couldn't make head or tail of 'em.

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. Sh! He's coming!

Enter DADDIE from house, gorgeously got up in grotesque evening dress and considerably elevated.

DADDIE. Splendid! Your dinner, sir, was splendid! Do you have a spread like that every day?

GOVERNOR. Not every day; it was in honour of our distinguished guest.

DADDIE. Just so! He's fond of his dinner, too. In fact he's charmed with the way you have in this

island of showing your hospitality. In other places they showed him nothing.

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. You have found your journey very disagreeable, I fear?

DADDIE. Excessively so. After being used, *comprenez-vous*, to living in society—to find one's-self all at once in a dirty inn in the depths of uncivilization——

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. How unpleasant it must have been for you!

DADDIE (*with a killing air*). But I find it quite the reverse at this moment, dear lady!

GOVERNOR'S WIFE (*curtseying*). Oh, how can you say so, sir! You do me too much honour.

Enter BILL, hurriedly, in evening dress.

GOVERNOR. Ah, here is my son at last. Allow me to introduce——

BILL (*with a start*). What? Da——

DADDIE (*signalling to him*). Charmed, I'm sure! Charmed to make the acquaintance of the son of so distinguished an official!

BILL (*aside*). Well, I'm blest!

Enter FOOTMAN.

FOOTMAN (*announcing guests*). The Bishop and Mrs. Chanton—Judge Deenlaw and Mrs. Deenlaw. (GOVERNOR, WIFE, and DAUGHTER go up L. to receive guests. BILL and DADDIE come down R.)

BILL. Look here, Daddie, what's going on?

DADDIE. Sh! Don't you see? They've mistaken Lesta for the Prince!

BILL. And you're playing up to it?

DADDIE. What do *you* think?

FOOTMAN (*announcing*). The Head Constable and Mrs. Catchem—the Mayor and Mrs. Water-drink.

BILL. But what about these private theatricals?

DADDIE. Songs, my boy, songs! Lesta's to do her own songs in her own character—just to keep up the incognito.

BILL. You don't mean to say that having come here as the *Prince* she is to play her own part and pretend to be *herself*?

DADDIE. That's about the size of it.

BILL. Oh, my head's like a tee-to-tum and I'm as giddy as if I stood on a steeple.

FOOTMAN (*announcing*). The Seneschal and Mrs. Sugarsand—the Postmaster and Mrs. Peep-hem.

BILL. But what the deuce is it all about? What is expected to come of it?

DADDIE. Sh! Didn't you get your letter?

BILL. What letter?

DADDIE. The one Lesta sent up, explaining everything.

BILL. Good heavens, no! What has become of it? I'll go and see. (*Exit BILL.*)

Orchestra enters and takes up position on terrace.

GOVERNOR (*clapping his hands*). Places, places, places! (GUESTS *seat themselves right and left of stage.*) (*Clearing his throat.*) Colleagues and friends! I have persuaded our distinguished guest—who is happily endowed with a wondrous gift of mimicry—to favour us with imitations of a certain music-hall singer. Only a common person, I fear, one who is never admitted into society like the present, but the more on that account the condescension of the illustrious personage who has consented to entertain us. (*The guests applaud.*)

GOVERNOR. This, dear friends, is not a case of the commercial theatre——

VOICES. No, no!

GOVERNOR. The august personage who deigns to sing to us has higher and nobler considerations, and his entertainment, I venture to suggest, will be found to be—ahem!—strictly moral.

BISHOP. Hear, hear!

GOVERNOR. A warning to all our young people and a lesson to the age!

DADDIE. Pickles!

GOVERNOR. Did you speak, sir?

DADDIE. Precisely! I said precisely!

GOVERNOR. Thanks! And now silence, dear friends, silence! (*Orchestra strikes up. LESTA comes out of tent in character and sings her first song. GUESTS applaud. Sunset begins.*)

LADIES. Beautiful! Charming!

JUDGE. Wonderful!

MAYOR. Delightful!

SENESCHAL. So clever!

HEAD CONSTABLE. Splendid!

BISHOP. So elevating!

POSTMASTER. So touch—touch—touching!

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. And so like! I'm sure it's like! (*To DADDIE.*) Isn't it like, sir?

DADDIE. Exactly like, dear lady!

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. Ah, I can imagine with what perfect art and taste the dear Prince has reproduced the original.

DADDIE. Perfect, madam, absolutely perfect! In fact you couldn't tell the difference between them.

Re-enter BILL.

POSTMASTER. And who—who—who——

DADDIE. Who is the original?

POSTMASTER. Yes, who—who is she?

DAUGHTER. *She?* Is it a woman then?

DADDIE. Yes, it's a woman—it's Lesta Lily. Ever hear of her? (*All shake their heads.*) No? Extraordinary! Most extraordinary! Such a popular favourite, too!

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. Let me see—Lesta Lily! I must have heard that name before.

DADDIE. Must have, dear lady!

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. She's a favourite, you say?

DADDIE. An immense favourite! The Prince knows her intimately.

GOVERNOR. The Prince knows her?

DADDIE. Nobody better. They're as thick as butter. Always together.

POSTMASTER. A—a—always?

DADDIE. Day and night! In fact they're like the Siamese twins—you can't separate them.

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. Why, of course, how stupid of me! Now I remember! Lesta Lily—certainly!

DAUGHTER. But, mamma dear, if Lesta Lily is a woman——

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. There! Of course! I *knew* you would want to argue!

BILL (*tugging at DADDIE's sleeve*). Hold hard, Daddie—you're letting the cat out of the bag. That letter hasn't come, and I've got my eye on the Postmaster.

GOVERNOR (*clapping his hands as before*). Silence, friends, silence! (*Orchestra again. LESTA sings her second song.*)

LADIES. How lovely!

HEAD CONSTABLE. How sweet!

JUDGE. How fascinating!

BISHOP. And how instructive!

GOVERNOR. Instructive! That's the word! As my dear colleague says, how instructive!

GOVERNOR'S WIFE (*to DADDIE*). If Lesta Lily is anything like that——

DADDIE. Anything like it? My dear lady, it's Lesta Lily to the life.

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. No wonder she's so popular.

DADDIE. Popular! It's ridiculous! I dare say you think a variety artiste is sometimes out of an engagement, but Lesta Lily—never! It *did* once happen that she was "on the out" for half an hour, but the moment it became known the street where she lives was chokeful of managers—managers after managers! Just picture to yourself thirty-two thousand managers rushing up four flights of stairs to her lodgings on the fourth floor back!

BILL (*aside*). Half time, Daddie!

POSTMASTER. The fou—fou—fourth floor?

DADDIE. Did I say the fourth floor? I was forgetting that she lives on the first floor. Why, the staircase alone cost her I don't know how much. And it's a curious sight to see her rooms on Sunday afternoon: authors and managers jostling and humming like bees: you can hear nothing but buzz, buzz, buzz! Yes, she knows all the literary men. For instance, she's on a very friendly footing with Swinburne. Sometimes she slaps him on the back and says, "How do, Swinny, my boy?" "So, so, old man," he replies; "things might be better."

POSTMAN. Old ma—ma—*man*?

DADDIE. Did I say "old man"? I was thinking

of the Prince. Yes, I must admit he lives in great style. He gives a supper every Sunday night.

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. Ah, I can fancy with what magnificence the suppers will be given!

DADDIE. It's a simple affair, not worth talking about! Tripe and onions, you know, and a bottle of Bass to wash it down!

POSTMASTER. The Prin—Prin—Prince?

DADDIE. Did I say the Prince? I meant Lesta Lily. But it's all one—they live together!

LADIES. Oh! (*The company start. BILL tugs at DADDIE's tail.*)

BILL (*aside*). For the Lord's sake, hold your tongue, Daddie! This is a serious business! You're putting your foot in it!

GOVERNOR (*clapping his hands*). Silence, friends, silence! (*Orchestra again. LESTA sings her third song. Chorus of praise from the company generally.*)

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. Well, if Lesta Lily is as good as that, she's charming.

CHORUS OF VOICES. Charming! Charming!

GOVERNOR'S WIFE (*to DADDIE*). But tell me—what is she like to look at? Anything like the dear Prince?

DADDIE. Absurdly like.

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. You don't say so!

DADDIE. Once they mistook her for the Prince.

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. Never!

DADDIE. Fact! You should have seen the Guards rushing out of Whitehall and saluting! And when she goes to Court——

GOVERNOR. She goes to Court, you say?

DADDIE. Constantly, every day, we go together. We have a whist club there—the Prince, one or two equerries, Lesta, and myself. She nearly kills herself over cards. And when she's rushing away to get down in time for her ten o'clock turn at the Halls, you'll see a nobleman flying after her on the stairs with a blacking-brush, thinking she's the Prince: "Allow me, your Highness, to clean your boots for you." (DADDIE *laughs*. *The company look at each other*. BILL *tugs again at DADDIE's coat-tail*.)

BILL. That'll do! Stop it, please—please!

DADDIE. But the funniest thing was when they were both staying at the same hotel somewhere. The Prince had come down to lay a foundation-stone or open a bazaar or something. Suddenly he fell ill, and the question was how his place was to be taken—who was to fill it? It was a devil of a business, because the Prince couldn't tell—he couldn't disappoint the people. There was nothing to be done but come to Lesta. So late at night, when everybody was in bed, he went over to her room in his dressing-gown——

LADIES. Oh! (*The ladies start from their chairs in alarm*.)

BILL (*aside*). Oh, Lord! Oh, Lord!

POSTMASTER. Was *she* in—in—in bed, or ou—ou—out?

DADDIE. Oh, *in*—I mean *out*—in and out! *Ill*, you know.

POSTMASTER. But did—did—didn't you say it was the 'Pr—Pr—Prince who was ill?

DADDIE. Did I? Same thing. Whenever the Prince is ill Lesta is ill, too! Extraordinary fact! Can't account for it!

BILL (*tugging at DADDIE*). Good Lord! Will you never stop? If you say another word I'll scream!

GOVERNOR (*clapping hands*). Silence! Silence! (*Orchestra again; LESTA sings her fourth song; universal applause.*)

GOVERNOR (*clearing his throat*). Ahem! Everything has a stopping-place except time, dear friends, and we must not trespass further on the indulgence of our distinguished guest. What he has shown us with his admirable art and what our eloquent friend (*indicating DADDIE*) has explained with his wonderful lucidity, teaches a great, an improving lesson—that women, like the one in question, whatever their gifts, whatever their fascinations, their alluring fascinations, are but the creatures of the great.

BISHOP. Hear, hear!

GOVERNOR. Shall we take such persons into our families?

JUDGE. No, no!

GOVERNOR. Shall we open our hearts to them?

HEAD CONSTABLE. Impossible!

GOVERNOR. Shall we clasp them to our bosoms?

BISHOP. Never!

DADDIE. Rats! (*The gong goes off in house with a loud bang. Twilight.*)

GOVERNOR. Ah, supper! (*Company rise.*) Bill, give your arm to your mother.

BILL (*aside*). Oh, Lord, my head's in a whirl! Where's that letter? Where? Where? (*To DADDIE, crossing.*) Tell Lesta I'll be back presently.

GOVERNOR. Now Bishop—Judge—Constable—Seneschal—Postmaster—will you! (*As he names them they pair off with ladies and go in. AGATHA stands waiting.*)

GOVERNOR (*taking DADDIE aside*). A word in your ear, my friend—Sidney—your name's Sidney, isn't it? (*DADDIE nods.*) Well, I hear—but this is confidential?

DADDIE. Oh, strictly confidential!

GOVERNOR. I hear that your little friend Lesta is in the Isle of Boy.

DADDIE. You don't say so!

GOVERNOR. Yes, she arrived to-day!

DADDIE. Well, who would have thought it! Talk of the angels——

GOVERNOR. Just so! The little woman must be charming, Sid—perfectly charming!

DADDIE. Oh, she is, Gov, she is!

GOVERNOR. Do you think now——

DADDIE. What?

GOVERNOR. If I made it worth your while, Sid—you could—eh?

DADDIE. Introduce you? Certainly! When shall it be, Gov?

GOVERNOR (*in a whisper*). Why not to-night? After supper, when everybody's gone to bed, we'll creep off——

DADDIE (*aside*). The old tom-cat! (*Aloud.*) Well, no, not to-night—there's the Prince, you know!

GOVERNOR. Ah, of course! Shall we say to-morrow morning, then?

DADDIE. To-morrow morning, by all means!

GOVERNOR. But not a word to your master!

DADDIE. Oh, not a word!

GOVERNOR. And not a syllable to my son!

DADDIE. Not a syllable! (*They giggle, laugh, wink, and nudge each other with their elbows.*) (*Aside.*) The old catawaller! (AGATHA coughs, GOVERNOR starts.)

GOVERNOR (*offering his arm*). Ah, Agatha, my child, I was just saying how sad it is that our sons do not follow in the footsteps of their fathers. That's the model—— (*Goes on talking.*)

LESTA comes bounding down from tent, followed slowly by MAMMIE. The moon rises.

LESTA (*intoxicated with excitement*). How's it going, Daddie?

DADDIE. Like a house afire! Did you hear me?

LESTA. Hear you? Did I nearly crack my sides to keep myself from exploding?

DADDIE. I drew the long bow certainly, but then no story is told without a *little* exaggeration. And what do you think *now*?

LESTA. What?

DADDIE. Old Cockatoo wants to be introduced to you!

LESTA. To me?

DADDIE. To Lesta Lily. I'm to bring him round in the morning, and the Prince is to know nothing about it.

LESTA. Oh! Oh! Oh! The Lord be with 'em! (*They roll about laughing.*)

MAMMIE (*gravely*). But, Lesta, do you know——

LESTA. Know what, Mammie?

MAMMIE. It's high time we were going!

DADDIE. Going? What nonsense! This sort of life just suits me to a T.

MAMMIE. I mean it. You've gone far enough with this deception; and after all what's going to be the good of it? Let us get away now—to-night!

DADDIE. Just when we're getting along so comfortably?

MAMMIE. You don't know what may happen next—somebody else may come. And, even if the others deserve to be made fools of, there's Bill——

LESTA (*putting her hand over MAMMIE's mouth from behind*). There, there, there! I know I've serious things to think about—very serious—but don't ask me to think of them now. Give me until to-morrow, Mammie. I can't think of serious things to-night! When the grey old world turns its back to the sun it has its face to the merry moon, and if we cannot wipe out our troubles we can sometimes forget them. Let me forget mine, Mammie. To-morrow I'll be Lesta Lily and meet the Governor and settle accounts with him. But to-night I'm the Prince, and I've a right to fool him to the top of his bent.

MAMMIE. But what——

LESTA. What am I going to do? I don't know—I don't care! The world's turned topsy-turvy to-night, and I feel like dancing on my head. I'm going to be the Prince a little longer—to feel what it is to have the contrast of condition forgotten, now that the difference is the other way about—to hear the faults I have never committed as a woman condoned now that I am a man! I'm going to see women as men see them—to make love to the

darlings and have the lovely dears make love to me!

DADDIE. What larks! Go it, girl, go it!

(LESTA and DADDIE are laughing and capering about, when AGATHA enters from house. Beautiful picture—seen under the moon-light.)

AGATHA. Ah!

LESTA. We frightened you, dear young lady!

AGATHA. Oh, no! I was not frightened. I was only about to say that supper is waiting.

DADDIE (*eagerly*). Supper? Certainly! (*Gives his arm to MAMMIE. They go off.*)

LESTA. But I don't want supper—I want to speak to you.

AGATHA. To me?

LESTA. May I dare to be so happy as to offer you a chair?

AGATHA. Indeed I do not know—I was merely sent to tell you—I really ought to be going. (*Takes seat.*)

LESTA. What a beautiful scarf you are wearing!

AGATHA. Ah, you only say that by way of compliment—you're laughing at our countrified fashions!

LESTA. Laughing? Impossible! How I should love to be that scarf that I might clasp your lovely neck.

AGATHA. I don't know what you mean, sir—What singular weather we are having!

LESTA (*sitting beside her*). Your little lips, though, are worth all the weather in the world.

AGATHA. I really don't understand—I was going to ask you to write some verses in my album.

LESTA (*moving her chair closer*). For you, Agatha, I will write anything.

AGATHA. I'm *so* fond of poetry.

LESTA. I know a lot of all sorts. Say the word—what shall it be?

AGATHA. I like love-poetry best.

LESTA (*edging closer*). I know a quantity of that sort too. What do you say to this: "Love is like a red, red rose, Love is like—love is like—" I don't just remember what love is like, but it *is* like it—and then the verses are of no consequence. Instead I offer you my love, my faithful love, which ever since your first fond glance— (*Falls on his knees.*)

Enter GOVERNOR'S WIFE.

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. Agatha!

LESTA (*rising*). Oh, my stars! The mother!

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. How dare you, miss? What's the meaning of this behaviour?

AGATHA. Mamma, dear, I——

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. Be off from here! D'ye hear me, be off! And don't dare to show your face to me again! (AGATHA goes in tears.) (*Full moonlight.*)

LESTA (*suffocating with laughter*). I'll make love to the old lady too!

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. Excuse me, sir, but I confess I was so astonished at my daughter's conduct——

LESTA. Don't mention it! It was all my fault. Forgive me, madam, I did it for love of *you*—only for love of *you*!

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. Of me?

LESTA (*throwing herself at her feet*). Yes, I offer you my love, my faithful love, which ever since your first fond glance——

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. But I don't quite comprehend. If I am not mistaken you were on your knees a moment ago to my child!

LESTA. No, to you! Despairing of speaking to you myself I was praying of your daughter to speak for me.

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. So it was I—but permit me to remark that I am, so to speak—well, I am *married*!

LESTA. Don't mention it! I mean what matter! Love knows no difference. Let us fly under the canopy of heaven! Let us——

Enter GOVERNOR.

GOVERNOR. Rubina!

LESTA (*rising, aside*). Oh, mother! The old man!

GOVERNOR. How dare you? How dare you treat His Highness with such familiarity? Really you behave like an eighteen-year-old girl, not in the least like an old woman of forty-five!

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. Well, what is it? What have you seen that is so surprising?

GOVERNOR (*to LESTA*). Don't take offence, sir, I beg, I pray! I'm innocent! Body and soul I'm innocent.

LESTA. Excellency, I love your child!

GOVERNOR. My child?

LESTA. Do not oppose our happiness, but add your blessing to a constant love.

GOVERNOR. Then it's my daughter—

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. *There*, now you see—it was all on Agatha's account that our guest was pleased to fall on his knees, and just as he was asking my consent you suddenly blunder in like a cat in a fit.

GOVERNOR (*dropping to his knees to LESTA*). Oh, my God! Don't do it, your Highness! Don't ruin me! She's not a Lesta Lily, and you can't take her without bringing disgrace on her father. Please take anything else your Highness thinks fit. Take *her*! (*Indicating wife.*)

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. But don't you understand, you blockhead! His Highness is asking for our daughter's hand in marriage!

GOVERNOR (*rising*). What? Marriage? You're mad! Excuse her, your Highness; but she's a little wrong in the head sometimes—she takes after her father.

LESTA. But I really wish to marry your child.

GOVERNOR. No, no—it's incredible! I daren't believe it—

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. Not when he *tells* you so?

GOVERNOR. He doesn't mean it—I'm not worthy of such an honour!

LESTA. But I *do* mean it and if you refuse I don't know what may happen. I'm a desperate man—if I blow my brains out *you* will be responsible!

GOVERNOR. *What?* What the devil. He's in earnest—really in earnest. Aha! Oho! What a stroke of luck!

LESTA. Have I your consent?

GOVERNOR. My consent! My blessing! My paternal blessing!

Enter BILL hurriedly.

BILL. Lesta!

LESTA (*rising and signalling to him*). Sh! Sh!

GOVERNOR. Bill, my boy, do you know the

honour his Highness has conferred on us—he has been pleased to ask for your sister's hand!

BILL. What! Agatha! Impossible! Inconceivable! It *cannot be!* I tell you it cannot! It's not natural.

GOVERNOR (*to LESTA*). Excuse him, your Highness—although he's my son he's a little wrong in the head sometimes—he takes after his mother.

BILL (*aside*). Oh, my head's in a whirl—I don't know what's going on.

LESTA (*edging up to BILL and offering her hand behind her*). Yes, I've told your father I love his child, and he has given his consent to our marriage.

BILL (*catching and kissing LESTA's hand*). Well, I'm blest!

GOVERNOR (*rubbing his hands joyfully*). That's all right! To-morrow we'll meet to settle all details of business——

LESTA. But to-night we'll devote to nonsense and a romp.

Enter AGATHA, DADDIE, MAMMIE, JUDGE, BISHOP, etc., with LADIES.

GOVERNOR. Ah, come here, I've an announcement to make to you. (*All gather round.*) Friends and colleagues all—see what honour Heaven has sent your Governor—he's going to marry his child, not to a nobody, but to one of the highest person-

ages in the land! (*Sensation, shaking of hands all round.*)

LESTA (*taking AGATHA for partner*). A waltz! A wild, intoxicating waltz! I'll sing you Lesta Lily's latest song to it!

GOVERNOR (*calling off*). Lights, lights! And play up there—devil take it, play up, you fellows! (*Fairy lamps flash out in various colours. Orchestra strikes up. LESTA sings. Company pair off and dance to the chorus—GOVERNOR and his WIFE, DADDIE and MAMMIE, OFFICIALS and LADIES—BILL only being out. At second chorus BILL drags AGATHA away and seizes LESTA. As curtain falls on the final chorus and shadow dance, BILL is seen kissing LESTA madly and dancing in wild joy.*)

CURTAIN.

ACT IV.

ACT IV.

SCENE:—*Same as ACT I.*

TIME:—*The following morning.*

GOVERNOR'S WIFE *in armchair at L. with work in lap.* SECRETARY *at desk, writing.* GOVERNOR *striding to and fro with a lordly air, dictating.*

GOVERNOR. Now we must reply to our confidential correspondent at the Treasury. (*Dictating.*) Dear friend and colleague——

SECRETARY (*writing*). Friend and colleague——

GOVERNOR. I have to acknowledge the receipt of your valued communication, and to report an extraordinary piece of good fortune which has just fallen to my family——

SECRETARY. Family——

GOVERNOR. The Prince arrived in disguise, but, thanks to your warning and my long experience in such delicate matters, I ferreted out his whereabouts directly——

SECRETARY. Directly.

GOVERNOR. At first the Prince was disposed to keep up his incognito, but when he saw that it was useless to try to deceive *me*, he threw off all further pretence, and, thank heaven, all went well.

SECRETARY. Went well——

GOVERNOR. Entering into a little innocent scheme for the relief of a domestic difficulty connected with my son, he accepted my hospitality, and before the day was over he was so impressed by my vigilance, shrewdness, and devotion to public duty——

SECRETARY. Public duty——

GOVERNOR. That he was pleased to propose for the hand of my favourite and only daughter.

GOVERNOR'S WIFE (*dropping her work*). My dear!

GOVERNOR. Be quiet! You know nothing about it. (*Dictating.*) It was a very serious predicament, and I confess I was a little frightened at first, not daring to hope for so high a reward even for long and arduous public services——

GOVERNOR'S WIFE Really, dearest!

GOVERNOR (*waving her aside*). And it was only when he deigned to go down on his knees to me in a most aristocratic manner, and to say——

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. But, dearest, he went down on his knees to *me*!

GOVERNOR (*again waving her aside*). And to say—it is all on account of your rare and charming qualities——

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. But he said that to Agatha!

GOVERNOR (*raising his voice to drown his wife's*). And I'll blow out my brains if you do not condescend to become my father-in-law——

SECRETARY. Father-in-law——

GOVERNOR. That, relying on the mercy of God, I consented, and everything came to a happy conclusion.

SECRETARY. Conclusion——

GOVERNOR. That'll do. Copy it out, and send it in by my daughter. (SECRETARY *gathers up papers and goes out.*)

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. But of course, dear, the Prince meant all that for Agatha.

GOVERNOR. No doubt, no doubt! He *meant* it for Agatha; I'm not denying that. But where would Agatha be without you and me, my love? Nowhere!

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. That's true!

GOVERNOR. Girls can't be too grateful to their parents.

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. They can't!

GOVERNOR. And wives, too—wives can't be too thankful to their husbands.

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. Well, as for that——

GOVERNOR. Confess it candidly—you never

even dreamt of such a thing. Before Agatha was born you were the wife of a simple insular Governor, and *now* see what a swell you've hooked for a son-in-law.

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. It's quite too wonderful!

GOVERNOR. Isn't it? Just think what a fine pair of birds we've become!

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. Haven't we?

GOVERNOR. We can fly pretty high now.

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. Of course we can!

GOVERNOR.—Won't I pepper those rascally officials who stole a march on me with the Prince! Won't I let the blackguards have it! I've a great mind to—but, no!

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. No, certainly not! What are they? Only commonplace people. Remember, our friends and acquaintances in future will be persons of quality and distinction.

GOVERNOR. You're right! They're beneath me! May the Lord forgive them. If they were in my position for a moment they'd roll me in the mud and club me on the head into the bargain. But I bear them no malice. Only let 'em mind their p's and q's, damn them——

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. What language you use, dearest!

GOVERNOR. Well, what of that—a word doesn't hurt.

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. No, perhaps not, when you're only an insular Governor, but when your circumstances are altered——

GOVERNOR. Of course! Of course! What do you think, Rubina? Where should we live in future—here or in London?

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. In London, of course! This island is really too rustic.

GOVERNOR. Very well, London be it then! The governorship can go to the devil—eh?

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. Certainly, my dear! What's a governorship now?

GOVERNOR. Just so! Don't you think I may get to the top of the tree, Rubina?

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. Of course you may.

GOVERNOR. And go to Court, and play whist in that club the old equerry talked about, and be hail-fellow-well-met with nobs and nabobs and lords and baronets?

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. Undoubtedly, my dear.

GOVERNOR. Rubina, what do you think, shall *I* do as a baronet?

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. I should *say* so—beautifully!

GOVERNOR. I confess I've a consuming ambition to be a lord, though.

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. Why not? With man it is impossible, but with heaven all things are possible.

GOVERNOR. Exactly! A great voyage becomes a ship, and when a man is father-in-law to a Prince, confound it——

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. Oh, it will be quite too lovely!

GOVERNOR. Won't it? I can see myself travelling about with him. Councillors, Constables, Mayors, Judges, Bishops, and Seneschals flying round you on every side. You receive all the public addresses and put them in the waste-paper basket. Then you dine with the Prince and sit above the Sheriff, and snub the little insular Governors— Eh? what? How's that for high, old lady? Ha, ha, ha! (*He laughs until the tears roll down his cheeks.*)

Enter the FOOTMAN.

Well, what is it?

FOOTMAN. Beg pardon, your Excellency, but it's half-past ten, and the strange gentleman ain't a-stirring yet.

GOVERNOR. The strange gentleman? Do you refer to the Prince?

FOOTMAN. Are you sure he's a Prince, your Excellency?

GOVERNOR. Am I sure he's a Prince? Of course I'm sure he's a Prince. Are you aware that he is to marry my daughter? How dare you call him the strange gentleman?

FOOTMAN. But he *is* a strange gentleman, your Excellency. When I took up his hot water at half-past seven he shouted through the door as he didn't shave and I wasn't to enter on any account. And when I mentioned his boots he told me to send in the maid with them.

GOVERNOR. Well, what of it? You told Curtis to take his boots into his bed-room?

FOOTMAN. All there is of them, your Excellency.

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. *All* there is of them?

FOOTMAN. They're threes, m'lady.

GOVERNOR. Threes?

FOOTMAN. High heels, satin bows, patent-leather tops, and pointed toes, your Excellency.

GOVERNOR. Ha, ha, ha! I see now! You've been to the wrong room. You took your shaving-water to the old lady.

FOOTMAN. The old lady had gone, your Excellency.

GOVERNOR'S WIFE *and* GOVERNOR. Gone?

FOOTMAN. Before the upper servants were up she sent Collins for a cab and went off with everything.

GOVERNOR. Went off with everything?

FOOTMAN. All their bits of sticks, your Excellency.

GOVERNOR. Their bits of sticks?

FOOTMAN. I mean their crates and egg-baskets, your Excellency.

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. Well, I declare!

GOVERNOR (*sarcastically*). And the old gentleman—did *he* shout through the door that he didn't shave?

FOOTMAN. No, the old gentleman's been a-shaving since seven o'clock, your Excellency.

GOVERNOR. Since seven o'clock.

FOOTMAN. As soon as the old lady was gone he got Collins to fetch up the whiskey.

GOVERNOR. Well?

FOOTMAN. He's been a-ringing for shaving-water every half a hour since, your Excellency.

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. Goodness gracious!

GOVERNOR. All right, my dear! Leave this to me. *I* think I understand. (*Severely.*) Jenkyns!

FOOTMAN. Yes, your Excellency.

GOVERNOR. You're a jackass, Jenkyns.

FOOTMAN. I'm aware, your Excellency.

GOVERNOR (*with dignity*). Then go to the Equerry's room—the right one this time, remember—and say the Governor is waiting to receive the Prince as soon as the Prince is ready.

FOOTMAN. Certainly, your Excellency.

(*Exit FOOTMAN.*)

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. But how strange! How singular! Do you think there's anything in it?

GOVERNOR. In what Jenkyns has just been

saying? Certainly there is something in it. Falsehood is in it; suspicion is in it; malice is in it; envy is in it; ignorance is in it. People can't have luck like ours, my love, without finding enemies even in their own household. God forgive 'em, what fools they are too! How silly! How stupid! How shortsighted! But wait—only wait! Agatha will be a Princess soon! and that will silence everybody. Think of it! Agatha! our Agatha! Princess Agatha! Ha, ha, ha, ha!

Enter AGATHA, letter in hand.

Ah, talk of the angels——

AGATHA. Edwards gave me this type-written letter to bring to you and I took the liberty of reading it.

GOVERNOR. Quite right, my child. We were just talking about your match—your splendid, glorious, magnificent match.

AGATHA. But, papa, you can't mean it!

GOVERNOR. Can't mean it, my dear?

AGATHA. You can't be serious, papa.

GOVERNOR. Can't be serious?

AGATHA. Last night I thought it was all a joke, but it seems you are really in earnest.

GOVERNOR. Really in earnest?

AGATHA. Of course it's impossible—perfectly impossible, papa!

GOVERNOR. Rubina, where am I? Feel if I'm in bed, Rubina! Pinch me! Punch me—see if I'm asleep! A child of mine has a chance of making the finest match ever heard of since the beginning of the world and she tells me it's impossible!

AGATHA. But it's so silly, so ridiculous! I don't know this gentleman—He doesn't know me. We never met until yesterday—and now—I can't! and I won't!

GOVERNOR. There you are, Rubina! You go to the trouble and expense of bringing a daughter into the world—an only daughter—a favourite daughter—and she treats you like that! (*He advances excitedly toward AGATHA. His WIFE intercepts him.*)

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. Be calm, dearest. It's a blow—a terrible blow——

GOVERNOR. You won't miss, won't you? Very well, *I* won't either. I won't lift another finger to find you a husband if you live a hundred years! More than that, I won't leave you a penny! I'll leave everything I have to my poor relations! I'll leave it to the home for lost dogs! I'll leave it—yes, I'll leave it to Bill——

Enter BILL.

BILL. I've come to ask you for the last time, dad.

GOVERNOR. Ask me what?

BILL. To allow me to marry Lesta.

GOVERNOR (*tapping his forehead*). Rubina—our children—both of our children! Isn't there a doctor about, Rubina?

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. Be quiet, Bill! Don't you see how agitated your father is this morning.

GOVERNOR. Fool! Simpleton! Didn't you hear that old equerry last night? He had been drinking, certainly—but when a man's tipsy he lets out everything. Didn't you hear what he said about your Lesta and the Prince—that they were as thick as butter—regular Siamese twins and you couldn't separate 'em?

BILL. But all that is capable of explanation, dad, and if you'll only listen——

GOVERNOR. Explanation? Fiddlesticks! Do you want the whole island to laugh at us? Those officials—confound them—they'll laugh enough at the Governor when they're told that his daughter won't marry the Prince, but when they hear that his son wants to marry the Prince's mistress——

BILL. Dad, I'm trying to save you from ridicule, and if you won't listen, you've only yourself to blame. Have I your permission—yes or no?

GOVERNOR. No!

BILL. Then I'll go, and you must take the consequences.

GOVERNOR. Go! You can both go! Block-

heads! Dunces! I'll leave everything I have to the monkeys at the Zoo! I'll leave it—I'll leave it to your mother——

Enter FOOTMAN.

Well, what do *you* want?

FOOTMAN. Beg pardon, your Excellency, but the old gentleman——

GOVERNOR. H'm! Shaving still, is he?

FOOTMAN. He wished me to say that the Prince will be here presently.

GOVERNOR (*tearing up the letter*). Too late! Too late!

FOOTMAN. He also begged me to tell your Excellency——(*Stops, looks round*).

GOVERNOR. Why don't you do it then?

FOOTMAN. That the charming little lady you wished him to introduce to your Excellency——

GOVERNOR. Sh! Sh! You fool, sh!

FOOTMAN. The charming little lady you wished him to introduce to your Excellency——

GOVERNOR. Look here—is it necessary to go on saying that?

FOOTMAN. The charming little lady is in the house also, and he will bring her along at the same time.

GOVERNOR. What do you say? What the deuce! At the same time. They can't meet here! Tell him to take her away! Take her away!

(*Exit FOOTMAN.*)

Enter DADDIE followed by LESTA in woman's costume

Oh, Lord, here she is!

DADDIE. Halloa! Thought I would kill two birds with one stone, guv.

GOVERNOR. Two birds—one stone?

BILL. This is Lesta Lily, Dad!

DADDIE. And this, your Excellency, is the Prince!

GOVERNOR. Lesta Lily! The Prince! What's the meaning of this tomfoolery?

BILL. It isn't tomfoolery now, Dad. It's earnest—solemn earnest. Lesta Lily and the Prince are one and the same person.

GOVERNOR. One and the same person! You're mad! Feel if you're wearing a straight waistcoat, Bill.

DADDIE. It isn't Bill who is wearing the straight waistcoat, Guv—it's yourself.

GOVERNOR. Myself!

DADDIE. You've been wearing it ever since you received your letter from London, and fell into the mare's nest by supporting that a simple variety artiste, rehearsing in character, was a Prince travelling in disguise.

GOVERNOR. Good Lord! Can it be possible? To be sure, what was there like a Prince in that young stripling? Nothing at all! How could I

think it? Idiot of a mutton-head that I am! There can't be such another blockhead in all Christendom! I must be in my dotage! I didn't used to be such a fool! Thirty years I've been in the service and nobody could take me in. Rogues and rascals have tried to over-reach me, and now—to be hoodwinked by a girl!

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. But this *cannot* be, dearest—the Prince is engaged to Agatha!

GOVERNOR. Engaged! Bosh! A fig for your “engaged!” The Prince is a woman—what's the use of a woman for a husband? Would a woman be any use to you for a husband? I'm crushed—regularly crushed! Look at me, Agatha, look!—see how your father's fooled! Ass! Booby! Dolt that I am! Taking a woman for a man! A music-hall singer for a man of rank! You can crow over me now, Agatha! Why don't you laugh? Laugh away! I hear all the world laughing! I see nothing but pig's snouts instead of faces from one end of the island to the other.

AGATHA. Oh, papa!

GOVERNOR. But if I've been a fool, somebody else has been a knave! All this was intended to trick me, wasn't it? To make me consent to Bill's marriage. To compel me to accept not only Lesta Lily but her family of mummers also! Her father the equerry—eh? Ha, ha, ha! (*To BILL.*) And you, you fat-nose! You've helped him, haven't

you? You've helped this old fellow to grind his own axe—to climb on my ladder—to shunt himself into my house—to——

LESTA (*stepping forward*). Stop! If you must blame anyone, blame me. It wasn't my fault that I came here in a false character, but it *was* my fault that I came at all. You had injured and insulted me, sir. Because I was only a poor girl working for a living I was outside your world, and had no business to care for your son. And because I was only a public singer I was a woman of low morals and had no right to marry him. Is work so criminal, sir, that a woman cannot earn her own bread without putting herself out of the pale of respect? And is it so wicked to please the public that a girl cannot do it and be worthy of the love of a good man? That's the opinion of nearly all such men as you, sir, and it's a lie—a cruel lie, and I wanted to prove it. (GOVERNOR *drops into a seat*.) You brought the poor singer to your house as a Prince—and you know what happened! Did it alter everything when my name was altered? Did I become a new creature when I put on other clothes? Or was it that the world itself turned the other way about when I ceased to be a woman and became a man? I can't say! I am too ignorant to understand these things. I only know that everything was changed, and you went down on your knees to thank me when you gave me permission to marry

your child. (*AGATHA creeps behind her father's chair and puts her arms about his neck.*) Perhaps it was a poor revenge, and I'm not sure it covers everything. I know it wasn't playing the game fair, and I'm not going to take advantage of my victory. I love your son, sir, and I think I should have made him a good wife, if you had permitted it—but nobody shall say that I have sown dissension in your family. (*Breaking down.*) I'm going away! The public loves me—God bless 'em—and so—and so—so I'm—I'm going back to—to where I'm wanted—(*Turning away*).

GOVERNOR (*leaping to his feet*). No, you're not! You shan't! Because you are going to stay here!

BILL. Dad!

AGATHA. Papa!

GOVERNOR'S WIFE. Husband!

GOVERNOR. I'm rightly served! It's true, if heaven wants to punish a man it first drives him mad. I was mad—mad with conceit and vanity, so I fell into the first fool's trap that lay open at my feet. All madmen are vain fools, and all vain fools are madmen. I deserve to be a laughing-stock—and my downfall is a lesson to toadies and touts and time-servers all the world over. But I'm not going back on my word—I'm going to face the music. Last night, when I thought you were

the Prince, I gave you my daughter—now, that I know you are Lesta Lily, I ask you to take my son.

BILL. Lesta!

LESTA. Bill!

Enter FOOTMAN.

FOOTMAN (*announcing*). The Lord Bishop—His Honour the Judge—His Worship the Mayor—the Head Constable—the Seneschal and the Postmaster!

LESTA. Let *me* see them—sir. Bill, go up to my sitting-room for the presents I was showing you this morning. (*Exit BILL.*)

DADDIE. And before they come let me cut a retreat. Nothing like lopping off your loose ends when the enemy's getting at your flank! I'm off, sir! You'll do better without me, and I'll not bother you again;—but last night, talking of a certain little lady—you said she was a stunner and a brick—and by God, sir, I'll give you leave to call me back when she doesn't fill the bill. Ta-ta!

(*Exit DADDIE, jauntily.*)

Enter the Six Officials on tip-toe, looking round.

HEAD CONSTABLE. Here's an astounding thing happened, sir—but where's your distinguished guest?

GOVERNOR. Not seen him this morning, gentlemen.

HEAD CONSTABLE. Good! The person we took for the Prince is *not* a Prince, your Excellency.

JUDGE. Not a Prince at all—the Postmaster found that out from the letter.

GOVERNOR. From what letter?

HEAD CONSTABLE. A letter he wrote himself.

POSTMASTER. To your so—so—son!

GOVERNOR. And you opened it?

HEAD CONSTABLE. Listen! (*Reading.*) “Dearest Bill, I hasten to tell you I have penetrated the mystery of the prince travelling in disguise.—It’s myself, and the officials of your Isle of Boy are taking me for his Royal Highness. Six of them have been here already. Such an awful set of originals—you would die of laughing if you could see and hear them! For reasons shortly to be revealed I intend to play up to their little game, so expect——”

LESTA (*stepping out*). “So expect to see me soon in a new character and pray the stars for my success.” (*OFFICIALS fall back; letter drops.*)

Re-enter BILL, carrying tray, etc.

GOVERNOR. Gentlemen, allow me to introduce Miss Lesta Lily—my future daughter-in-law!

JUDGE (*to other OFFICIALS*). A trick!

HEAD CONSTABLE. Faked!

MAYOR. Fooled!

BISHOP. He has known it from the first!

LESTA. Bishop, when you called on me at the Inn you left something behind you, and I put it into this paper. The Church should be generous, my lord, but it should scorn to be corrupt. (*Gives back his money.*) Judge, you were suffering from a certain emotion when I saw you last, and these notes fell out of your fingers: Justice should be blind, your Honour, but not stupid. (*Gives back his money.*) Constable, pretending to think I was an impoverished traveller, you gave me something from the poor-box—the Police should be pitiful, sir, but not pilferers. (*Gives back his money.*) Mayor and Seneschal, when you asked me to do you a certain favour, you gave me this little testimonial—public money is a public trust, Mr. Mayor, and secret commissions is only another name for bribes. (*Gives back tray, etc.*)

BILL (*picking up letter*). But you've forgotten the Postmaster, and *I* have something to give *him*!

POSTMASTER. Don—don—don't mention it!

BILL. Why did you open my letter?

POSTMASTER. I don—don—don't know! A super—super—natural force imp—imp—elled me to break the se—se—seal!

BILL. Well, a supernatural force impels me to break your head. But I give you your choice—a report to the Postmaster-General, or five kicks!

POSTMASTER. Oh, lo—lor—lord! Have you the heart to do—do—do it, sir?

BILL. No, but I've the foot. Which is it to be?

POSTMASTER. Five kic—kic—icks, then!

BILL. Come along!

(Exit BILL, followed by POSTMASTER.)

LESTA (*opening petition*). I've something else here, gentlemen, signed by all of you—it's only an old story—a story of jealousy and envy—as old as the story of Joseph and his brethren. If nothing happens I'll keep it for my private reading, but if any of you should ever whisper a word against anybody in this house I might be tempted to read it to the Governor also.

POSTMASTER (*voice heard outside*). On—on—one! (*Fervently.*) Tw—tw—two! (*More fervently.*) Thr—thr—three! (*Still more fervently.*) Fou—fou—four! (*With a loud cry.*) Fi—fi—five!

Re-enter BILL, with the right leg of his trousers doubled up. A cannon-shot is heard. All start.

GOVERNOR. What's that?

BILL (*at back*). A yacht in the bay! A royal yacht!

Enter SECRETARY, followed by NAVAL OFFICER.

NAVAL OFFICER (*saluting*). His Royal Highness Prince Henry has arrived on a visit to the Isle of Boy and requests the attendance of the Lieutenant-Governor and his executive.

(Exit OFFICER.)

(*All utter simultaneously ejaculations of amazement. GOVERNOR'S WIFE and DAUGHTER run up to balcony.*)

GOVERNOR. Gentlemen, we are all friends now. We have learned our lesson and buried our bitterness, so we'll go down to the quay together to welcome the real Prince.

VOICES. Hurrah! The Prince! The Prince!
(*Band heard outside.*)

LESTA. And I'll sing the Royal Chorus to set you off!

(*LESTA sings the Chorus of a song she sung in previous Act. GOVERNOR and OFFICIALS repeat it, singing together as they go off.*) (EXEUNT.)

(*When they are gone, BILL comes down and LESTA falls into his arms. They sit on sofa, face to audience. Band and procession going under window.*)

AGATHA (*on balcony*). The Prince is coming ashore in a launch. They're blowing off steam.

BILL (*kissing LESTA*). So am I, Agatha!

AGATHA (*looking off*). Easy ho! Half speed! Slow astern! Keep her close! Brace her up, boy!

BILL (*embracing and kissing LESTA*). I will! I will!

(*Cheers, shouts, singing, firing of guns, etc., as Curtain falls.*)

[THE END]

JUN 6 1965

THE ISLE OF BOY

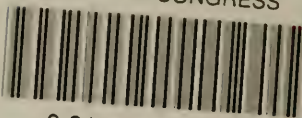


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